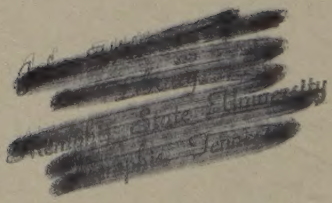

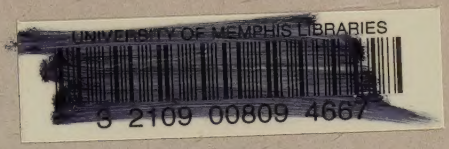

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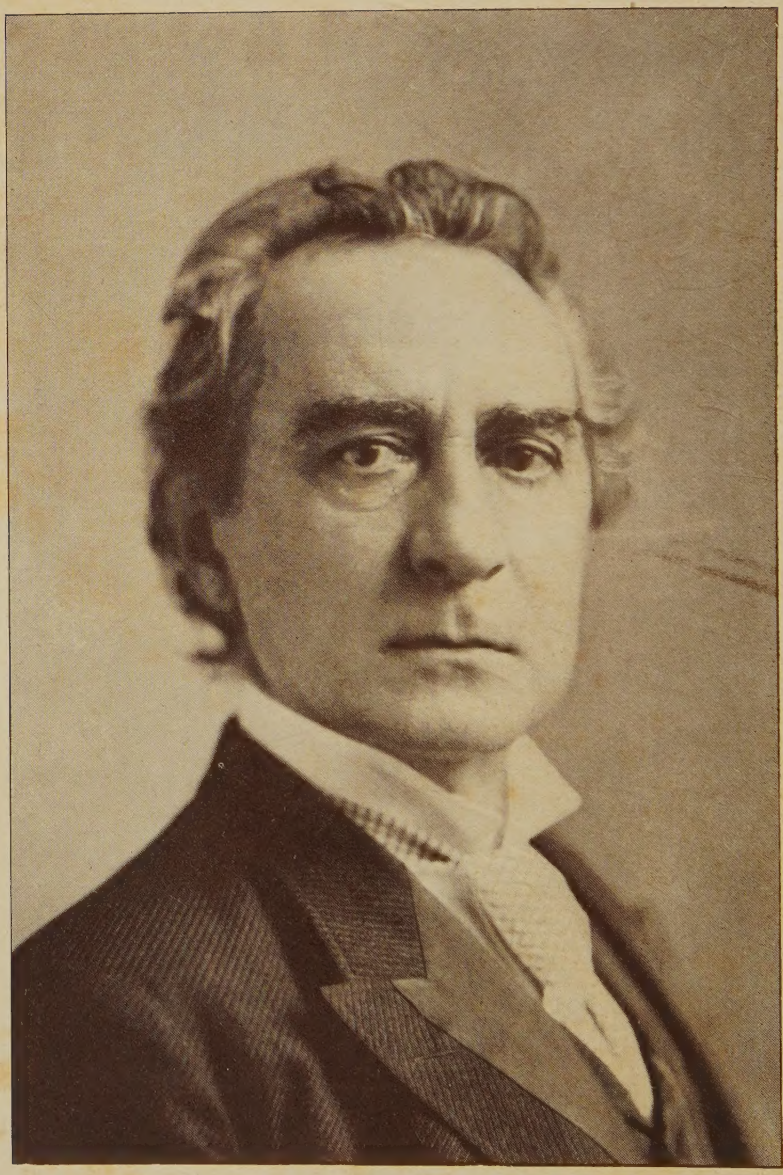

EDWIN BOOTH

SIXTY YEARS OF THE THEATER

AN OLD CRITIC'S MEMORIES

By

JOHN RANKEN TOWSE

Forty-three Years Dramatic Critic of "The New York Evening Post"

ILLUSTRATED

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY

NEW YORK AND LONDON

1916

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TO MY WIFE

Oldest and Dearest of Comrades

PREFACE

The writer of these reminiscences is fully conscious of their disorderly, discursive and imperfect form. When he began to jot them down for serial publication in *The Evening Post*, he did not foresee the possibility of their ultimate collection in a single volume, or he would have arranged them differently, with greater respect for convenient grouping and chronological sequence. This may help to explain, if not to excuse, many obvious shortcomings. These pages make no pretense of being a complete historical record even of the period with which they deal. If they have any value it is because they record the honest impressions and convictions of one who has been a lifelong lover and student of the theater—which ought to be one of the most beneficial, as it is certainly one of the most potent agencies at the disposal of civilization—and who has enjoyed exceptional facilities for seeing it at its best and worst, and noting its influences for good or evil. He can only hope that he has not altogether abused them. Many readers, doubtless, will disagree with some of his theories, conclusions, and critical estimates, and he is not silly enough to imagine that his judgments are infallible, but these, such as they are, are based upon experience and comparison, not upon personal prejudice or predilection. Playgoers of an older generation, who remember

Macready, Forrest, the Keans, the Booths, Davenport and their contemporaries, will readily assent to the degeneracy of the modern theater in all matters of sheer artistry and histrionism. It is only in scenic accessories, and in the lighter and less permanent varieties of drama that it has made any notable advance. Some attempt has been made herein to point out some of the main causes of this generally acknowledged decadence, and to indicate the most hopeful measures for its arrest.

Much of the ground traversed in this book has been abundantly trodden, but the author ventures to hope that it may acquire a certain freshness of aspect, when regarded from independent, and specially selected points of view. He has tried to avoid all the flattest and least interesting spots. If he has skipped some worthy of notice, through carelessness or incapacity, he is heartily sorry. It is too late now to make amends. With regard to living actors and actresses, to whom he has not referred, it may be pointed out that he has not professed to discuss any who were not prominent in the public eye at the opening of this century. It only remains for him to acknowledge, very gratefully, the enrichment of the text by the courteous aid in photographic material extended by Messrs. Sarony, Mora, and the White Studio, Keen's Chop House, of New York; Mr. F. A. King, Mr. Guy Nichols and Mr. Daniel Frohman.

J. Ranken Towse.

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SIXTY YEARS OF THE THEATER

I

THE FIRST PANTOMIME AND SOME FAMOUS BRITISH STOCK COMPANIES

More than sixty years have passed since I first entered the portals of a theater. Of the identity of the house I am not certain. I think it was the old Adelphi in London—but the date was April, 1853, the occasion was a birthday, and the play was "Jack the Giant Killer" with Lydia Thompson, yet in her teens, as the hero. She died long ago an old woman in her eighth decade, unknown to the rising generation, but in her youth she was a vision of loveliness yet cherished in the memories of elderly playgoers, and she was a public favorite on both sides of the Atlantic for very many seasons. Without having any pretensions to genius or to substantial fame, she is worthy of remembrance as a pillar in that institution of English burlesque which flourished mightily in mid-Victorian days, fell gradually through various de-

grees of disrepute into utter degradation, but, nevertheless, furnished the legitimate stage with some of the cleverest comedians of modern times. No woman, or man either for that matter, ever danced the sailor's hornpipe as she did in her heyday, with such an exquisite combination of vigor, agility, and grace. The spirit, speed, and airy lightness of her performance were incomparable.

This juvenile impression would scarcely have been worthy of record here if the essential truth of it had not been confirmed amply by later experience and riper judgments, and if it had not inspired in the juvenile beholder a passion for the theater which was to prove a dominant influence throughout his future life. Moreover, the fair Lydia and her associate acrobatic mimes were typical products of the period in which they throve, when the old order of the stage, dignified by the survival of the literary drama, and such players as the Kembles, Macready, and Edmund Kean, was slowly but surely passing away, to be replaced by a dismal and prolonged era of sentimental or violent melodrama, pseudo-romance, domestic comedy equally destitute of truth and reason, knock-about farce, and spectacular frivolity. Of this mixture burlesque, in its best estate, was by no means the most contemptible element.

Before it came to disregard completely its proper functions it used to provide some effective satire for which there was abundant food in all directions.

After that first performance of "Jack the Giant Killer," I became a more or less constant frequenter of the London playhouses, passing first, under guardianship, through a course of pantomimes—which were almost always preceded by a play of some kind—and then, when endowed with a larger measure of personal liberty, paying delightful visits, many of which were all the sweeter for being surreptitious, to various "pits," especially those of Old Drury, the Haymarket, the Adelphi, the Princess's, and the Olympic. Within these walls, during the fifties and the sixties, while I was at school and college, I made my first acquaintance with the older classic drama, both tragic and comic, and saw prominent representatives of the "old school"—the school of stock companies, hard work, and comparatively small pay—in some of their most successful parts, and first learned the distinction between a mere performance and a characterization. Most of these old actors were in their prime in the first quarter of the nineteenth century and observed the traditions of the eighteenth. Few of them had genius, but all had served a

long apprenticeship and knew their trade thoroughly, being able to acquit themselves creditably, if not with distinction, in any line of dramatic business. They varied, of course, in intellectual and technical capacity, as do the actors of today. Some of them, indisputably, were too precise, stiff, and mechanical in action, adhered too rigidly to arbitrary methods, and used conventional and unsatisfying symbols, but nearly all displayed a clear intelligence, a ready control of eloquent and appropriate gesture, and the faculty of crisp, fluent, melodious speech. In a word, they were masters of those accomplishments essential to the proper exercise of their profession, in which most of our modern actors are conspicuously deficient. Among them, as in the contemporary theater, there were performers who had mistaken their calling, caricatures of their order, whose absurd affectations made them ridiculous and doubtless suggested the immortal Crummles family to Charles Dickens. Several of them lingered before the footlights up to a very recent date, and were legitimate objects for the satirical shafts of the younger generation of critics, who accepted them as fair exemplars of that "old school" of which, owing to the happy accident of youth, they themselves could have no personal experience.

It is because I have had that experience, because I have been not only a regular theatergoer, but a theatrical devotee and observer, not to say a student, for sixty years (nearly twenty years in England and more than forty in this country), that I have been moved to jot down these random recollections, with the convictions that have grown out of them; with no notion of writing either a compendious history or a philosophic treatise. To touch even lightly upon all the salient features of six decades of theatrical happenings would require far more time and space than I have at command. To add to insignificant details the dishonest flatteries and the meaningless verbiage of which the vast bulk of modern theatrical writing is largely compounded would be almost criminal. I shall speak solely of matters coming under my personal observation, endeavoring to avoid, as far as possible, the beaten track, in the hope of awakening fresh interest in a somewhat hackneyed subject by a frank and independent treatment of it.

And this, perhaps, is a convenient point for the statement of one definite conclusion that has been forced upon me, and that is that during the last fifty years the art of acting upon the English-speaking stage has steadily declined; that, judging by the standards which prevailed at the be-

ginning of that period, there is not upon the American stage to-day a single player, male or female, of the first rank, and that this result is due chiefly to the establishment of the commercial star and circuit system by speculative managers, possessed of considerable executive ability, but, as a rule, devoid of artistic knowledge, instincts, or ambition; partly to the creation of railroads, which have made the circuit system feasible, and partly to the enormous improvements in mechanical and lighting devices, which have increased the possibilities of spectacle and thus enabled managers to attract the remunerative crowd, with whom an appeal to the eye is so much more potent than an appeal to the understanding or good taste. It is a popular dogma that old men are apt to underestimate and decry the present in comparing it with the past —to find new savors insipid and inferior—but I do not believe that I can be justly included in that category. My interest in the theater is still keen, in spite of frequent weariness and vexation of spirit, and my belief in its infinite potentialities, if wisely conducted as an agent of the higher civilization, is as profound and unshaken as ever. It is the one human institution, of which all the arts are the handmaids, whose peculiar privilege it is to illustrate and enforce the sound-

est principles of art, morality, and social law, under the seductive guise of entertainment. It must fascinate or amuse, or be powerless for good. If it does nothing but amuse, it is worthless and probably mischievous. Horribly mismanaged and abused for many years, it has fallen into depths of degradation, lower and more poisonous, if less frankly coarse, than those reached by the comedy of the Restoration. But it is a long lane that has no turning. Already there are signs, daily growing stronger, of coming radical changes in existing conditions, if not of a general reformation. Among these are the multiplying perplexities, and difficulties, and wavering policies of the syndicates, whose expensive and inferior shows are finding successful rivals in the cheaper and more honest diversion of vaudeville and the "movies"; the organization of stock companies in this country and in England; the entrance of new and capable writers, male and female, into the dramatic field, and the appearance in England of a new group of young and promising actors. All these phenomena are encouraging, and sometimes I indulge in the sanguine dream that I may yet, at the end of life, witness something like a revival of what was best in the old dispensation whose dying throes I watched in my adolescence.

But opportunities for reflections and forecasts will present themselves later. The immediate business is to recover the thread of juvenile reminiscences. The earliest of these are connected either with the pantomimes, of which a great variety was produced every Christmas, with extravaganzas or other ephemeral pieces, which would afford small excuse for comment, even if the memory of them were clear, or a boy's opinion valuable. But on the British pantomime in general of fifty years ago, as an institution which flourished annually, not only in nearly all the regular London theaters, but in scores of the larger provincial houses, a few lines may not be uninteresting. Professedly a festival for children, attendance upon it—as in later days upon the circus—became a habit of adults who sought in it from year to year a renewal of their own childish delights. I found pleasure in it for nearly twenty years, and have often wondered why a form of entertainment so commercially profitable—as George L. Fox proved it to be—never took permanent root in New York. Like burlesque, pantomime seems to be dying out in England—although it still prospers exceedingly at Drury Lane and elsewhere—probably because the quality of it has deteriorated. At the time of which I am speaking, and up to 1870, it presented

attractions of a very varied and, in their way, excellent kind. Actors of good capacity, singers, dancers, and gymnasts were employed in the first part, in which one of the old nursery fairy tales, or an amalgamation of two or three of them, was presented in a spirit of grotesque humor, with an occasional coloring of romance.

The dialogue generally written in rhymed verse, seasoned with puns and packed with topical and political allusions, often extremely felicitous, was furnished by practical pen-men, and was incomparably superior to the miserable gibberish which accompanies the jingles of modern musical comedy. For many years the Drury Lane prologues were composed by E. L. Blanchard, who had a vein of wit somewhat akin to that of W. S. Gilbert. Tom Taylor, long the dramatic critic of the London *Times,* and one of the most untrustworthy judges of histrionic merit who ever occupied so influential a position; F. S. Burnand and Mark Lemon, the well-known editors of *Punch;* H. J. Byron, Harry Leigh, the author of that extraordinary comic song, "The Twins," which is virtually unknown to this generation; James Albery, the playwright, and many other writers of similar caliber were among the men who displayed their wit in these pantomime introductions. Among the artists who provided

the scenery were such masters of color and design as Beverley, Telbin, and Clarkson Stansfield, and some of their creations were marvels of imaginative beauty.

After the prologue, which constituted the main part of the show, lasting, perhaps, for a couple of hours, came the harlequinade, rich in riotous fun and ingenious mechanical surprizes. The clowning of such buffoons as old Tom Matthews and Charles Lauri was not unworthy of comparison with that of their famous predecessor, Grimaldi himself, and was greeted with enthusiastic roars of approbation. These pantomimes were, and still are, always produced for the first time on Boxing Night—the night after Christmas—and it was no child's play to fight one's way into the pit at Drury Lane on such an occasion. A long covered passageway then led to the ticket office—as it probably does now—which stood behind two mighty doors which opened inward. These were kept closed until half an hour before the beginning of the performance, and all who wished to get into the front seats—among the very best in the house—had to secure a place in front of them late in the afternoon or very early in the evening and hold his own in a crowd which grew more dense with every succeeding minute. On one well-remembered Boxing Night, somewhere in

the middle sixties (I have now no means of verifying the exact date), I had gained and maintained a position about twenty feet from the closed barriers. With her back against them, facing the mob, stood a resolute woman, who, when the doors were opened, naturally was swept from her feet and fell before the rush, the leaders of which tumbled on top of her. Over their prostrate bodies poured the crowd in solid phalanx, the front ranks impelled by irresistible pressure from behind. I was carried inward on the flood, never feeling my feet, fearing that my ribs would collapse, but all unconscious of the unfortunates beneath me. Getting inside the theater I hurdled over the benches to the front row, where I recovered my breath, and did not know until the next morning that of the persons who had been trampled upon several were killed and others seriously injured. I saw other pantomimes from the pit after that, but not on a Boxing Night.

Whether pantomime of the purely British type would take the fancy of the American public may well be doubted, but it is not easy to think of any reason why a modification of it along American lines should not prove a profitable enterprise. Harmless and effective theatrical entertainment for the little ones is among the crying needs of

our modern civilization. The manager supplying it would reap vast profit.

The fresh enthusiasm of youth is utterly subversive of sound judgment, and I shall not pretend to speak authoritatively concerning performances which I saw before my twentieth year. That is not a judicious age, but by that time I had served a pretty long apprenticeship in theatergoing and had acquired some small power of discrimination. Already theatrical conditions were changing. Only four or five of the old stock organizations in London survived. Chief among them was the company at the Haymarket Theater, under J. B. Buckstone, the recognized home of the higher comedy for many years; the Adelphi, largely devoted to melodrama under the management of Benjamin Webster, and Sadler's Wells, where the mantle of the illustrious Samuel Phelps—of whom more hereafter—had descended to Miss Marriott and others.

Of lesser note were the companies headed by Sarah Lane at the huge Victoria Theater, in Hoxton—where fried fish was served in the boxes as a relish to dramatic art—and the Surrey Theater, under the direction of Creswick and Shepherd. These two were reckoned among the transpontine houses, and catered to enormous audiences of the poorest kind drawn from the working-classes,

small tradesfolk, mechanics, costers, and others. The entertainments in them, naturally, were as a rule of a popular kind, consisting of spectacles, screaming farce, sentimental domestic plays, and highly colored melodramas, but the actors, especially the low comedians, were thoroughly capable, and Shakespearean tragedies and comedies and other standard pieces were not infrequently the principal dishes in a theatrical menu of great variety and abundance. In those days it was not uncommon to find a tragedy, a comedy and a couple of farces upon the programme, and the spectators sat with unflagging satisfaction through them all. And the representations, if seldom brilliant, were as seldom slovenly or incomplete. Actors had to work for their living then, many of them appearing in three or four widely contrasted parts in a single evening. Sometimes the cast was headed by a visiting player of the first rank—the beginning of the star system which has since been so prodigiously and mischievously developed—who was generally assured of satisfactory support. Unless I am mistaken, Macready himself acted at the Surrey; Phelps certainly did. Mrs. Lane and Messrs. Shepherd and Creswick were all sound interpreters of Shakespearean character.

I have not included the company which for

several years supported Charles Kean at the Princess's Theater among the regular stock companies, because he organized it for his own special purpose, and added to it or subtracted from it as occasion required. But nevertheless it was the stock system which produced the accomplished players who helped to make his management at that house so memorable. This was the case also at other prominent West End theaters, where eminent performers were supported by scratch companies engaged for a season or a run. All the best subordinate performers owed their capacity to their long training in the "stock," either in London or in the old established provincial theaters. The day was yet to come when the public should be asked to welcome the representation of ancient or modern masterpieces—productions of the latter kind, unfortunately, are few and far between—by a star and a bundle of sticks. Now, alas, the star himself—or herself—shines only with a fictitious glitter, the reflection of flaming and mendacious advertisement. Most of our contemporary theatrical valuations are ridiculously extravagant, and the stage itself, perhaps, is suffering quite as much from the false glamor with which the box-office agents and the daily press have conspired to invest it as from any other particular condition.

It is the fashion to describe our second or third rate mummers in terms which would be flattering to a Siddons or a Garrick and to record their petty sayings and doings as if these were actually matters of public importance and interest. How many of the names of existing stage luminaries which now confront us on the street posters and in the newspapers will be remembered in the next generation? The question is easily answered.

II

CHARLES KEAN, J. B. BUCKSTONE, AND THE HAYMARKET COMPANY

Circumstances prevented me from seeing Charles Kean upon the stage, except in early childhood, but I encountered him frequently in public places during his declining years, and he was so constantly the subject of discussion in the contemporary press and among my personal acquaintance that I feel justified in framing an estimate of him founded on second-hand but strongly corroborated information. He was the subject of fervent adulation and savage attack, but did not deserve either. Of his father's erratic but brilliant genius he inherited no spark. In stature and carriage he was insignificant; his visage lacked distinction, though he had good eyes and forehead; his voice was deficient in power and range and his utterance was faulty. He turned his *n*s and *m*s into *d*s and *b*s. As Hamlet he said, in the play scene, " 'Tis a Vedetiad story—His dabe is Godzago—He poisod hib in the garded," and so forth. But he was an energetic, capable, ambitious man, with scholarly and

archeological tastes, artistic and theatrical instincts, and a plentiful supply of self-reliance.

His wife, Ellen Tree, an actress of uncommon ability, if not of positive genius, and in her prime, before she grew stout and unwieldy, a woman of notable beauty and dignified charm, was his "better half" in more senses than one. They were a devoted couple, and their long wedded life, untouched by scandal, was an example of conjugal happiness and respectability not too common in the profession. She humored his vanity, which was colossal, and held him in complete but unconscious subjection. She stooped to conquer. No adulation was too gross for Kean's self-esteem. He writhed beneath the lash of criticism. The most glowing praise gave him no satisfaction if qualified ever so craftily with exceptions. He remonstrated, almost tearfully, with friendly critics who ventured to suggest that his performances, even in minor respects, might possibly be susceptible of improvement. It is recorded of him that he called one of them aside, and read aloud a rhapsodical eulogy of himself that had been printed in some little Grub Street publication, adding, "That, sir, is what I call honest criticism."

Some of the critical shafts discharged at him carried a very sharp sting. When he played

King John at the Princess's—a character in which Macready had achieved one of his greatest triumphs—he engaged Phelps to support him in the part of Hubert. Commenting in *Punch* upon the representation, Douglas Jerrold remarked that Mr. Phelps had, in the most generous manner, publicly presented Mr. Kean, upon his own stage, with a complete extinguisher. The fact is that few authoritative critics of his day ever regarded Charles Kean as a great actor, although they praised his painstaking intelligence and his zeal and liberality as a producer. No great character, either in tragedy or comedy, has been associated with his name. The Lear and Abel Drugger of Garrick, the Shylock of Edmund Kean, the Macbeth of Macready, the Sir Peter Teazle of Chippendale, the Sir Pertinax McSycophant (in "The Man of the World") of Phelps, the Sir Giles Overreach, of E. L. Davenport, and the Hamlet of Edwin Booth—the list might be extended almost indefinitely—are constantly quoted as histrionic masterpieces, but no single creation of Charles Kean was preeminent. His Hamlet, the most successful of his Shakespearean interpretations, was a fairly able and elaborately finished bit of work, but owed much of its popularity to the excellence of his support and the richness of his pictorial setting. It was in romantic melo-

drama, such as "Louis XI" and "The Corsican Brothers," that his talents were displayed to the best advantage.

The conspicuous position which he long occupied in the English dramatic world may be easily explained. He appeared on the scene in a period of tragic decline. Macready, who was proud of his art, but who despised his profession, had acquired a competence and was about to seek in seclusion relief from the pangs of envy and the innumerable frets to which his unhappy disposition perpetually exposed him; the Kemble group was disappearing; Phelps, devoted to his great work in Islington, was yet virtually unknown, except in secondary characters, to the West End of London, and thus he had no rival to contend with him in the Shakespearean field. Moreover, he had the prestige of his father's name, had been educated at Eton, where he formed social connections which were invaluable to him afterward, and he had money. He was, as it were, born to the purple, and was generally regarded as the providential champion who was to revive the fading glories of the classic stage. And it may be admitted freely that he made good use of his opportunities.

Though a second-rate performer himself—he had, it may be noted, served but a brief apprentice-

ship in the stock companies—he was an industrious student of the traditions and mechanism of the theater, and had an almost pedantic reverence for the verities of architecture, costume, and all archeological details. He strongly rebuked an actor who was playing the porter in "Macbeth" for failing to direct the attention of the audience to the keys which he was carrying, which were copies from a rare antique pattern. A master of all traditional poses and points, he knew how this or that distinguished performer had worn his bonnet, drawn a glove on or off, or fingered the hilt of his sword. His care in such matters was meticulous, and in all his work there was far more evidence of calculation than of inspiration. He was a stickler also for the text—although he did not hesitate to cut it—and never considered cost in preparing a spectacle. His Shakespearean pageants excelled the most notable productions of Macready, in magnificence, in accuracy, and often in the capacity of his supporting casts. He was frequently outplayed by his subordinates, though his egotism preserved him from all consciousness of the fact. He is entitled to every credit for keeping the literary and poetic drama before the public, and for his dignified and picturesque treatment of it, but it is a question whether in the long run he did not do the stage

more harm than good. His demonstration as an actor-manager of the efficacy of spectacle with the crowd as a substitute for fine acting was a lesson that was not lost upon his immediate successors and was productive of infinite mischief. Scenery was developed at the cost of histrionism, until, in the end, commercial managers found it profitable to ignore acting altogether in such glittering trash as "Babil and Bijou" or "The Black Crook."

The Haymarket Theater was the recognized home of polite comedy in London for more than a generation, under the management of John Baldwin Buckstone. Its reputation was well maintained throughout the sixties, although the brilliancy of its representations had been somewhat diminished by the death or desertion of able performers. It was to London what Wallack's, in its palmy days, was to New York. There the connoisseur could depend upon seeing an old comedy—if one happened to be on the programme—played in the appropriate manner, with the formal polished style to match the artificial speech, with robust but unforced humor and smooth, unhesitating action. He could be certain also of hearing good dialogue crisply delivered with due attention to rhythm and emphasis. The ridiculous notion that plays of a bygone period should be

recast and presented in modern fashion to conform to modern habits and ideas had not then been broached. It originated probably with commercial managers, who, being at their wit's end for new plays, dreamed of profits to be made by a resort to the famous older pieces, but realized the impossibility of collecting, at short notice, a company of players capable of presenting them properly or effectively, without a preliminary course of instruction which they were utterly unable to supply. When once the idea was suggested that even if there were no actors to fit the plays, the plays might be renovated to fit the actors, it was not long before it was put into execution.

There was no difficulty in finding complacent adapters, ready to undertake the job of modifying and condensing the action, pruning and paraphrasing the dialogue in order to make it more amenable to untrained diction, and devising new "business" for the aggrandizement of "stars"—in the near future Augustin Daly was to become one of the most conspicuous of these offenders—heedless of the fact that in this process of transformation and emasculation the spirit and essence of the original, with most of its literary, historical, and typical value, must be ruthlessly destroyed. And so it came to pass in the progress

of the years that the unsophisticated public was beguiled with so-called revivals of the "legitimate" drama which actually were nondescript perversions of the original article, often entertaining enough in their way, but valueless from the literary, artistic, or histrionic point of view. But at the Haymarket, in the period under consideration, the old comedies — except for the "cuts" sanctioned by the best stage usage— were given as they were written and in accordance with the old scene plans and directions. There were no elaborate and costly interiors, no enclosed box scenes, flats and wings were shifted before the eyes of the spectators, and the players made their exits and their entrances through the first, second, or third groove. The realism, of course, was less than in these more fanciful and luxurious scenic days, but the vexatious stage waits of the present were avoided, while the illusion of actuality was, for all practical purposes, as well maintained as it is now. All stage scenery, from the crudest daub to the most exquisitely finished pictures exhibited by Henry Irving, or the symbolical and impressionistic fantasies of Gordon Craig, are necessarily and manifestly a bit of make-believe, and at its best can only contribute to the illusion created by the actors, the main dependence of the theater.

It was not my good fortune to see many of the standard comedies as interpreted at the Haymarket. The representations which are most distinct in my memory are those of "Twelfth Night," "The Rivals," "The School for Scandal," and "She Stoops to Conquer." I have forgotten the names and even the aspect of many of the principal actors, but several of the characterizations are still vivid to me. Among them are the Sir Benjamin Backbite and Tony Lumpkin of Buckstone, the Crabtree of Henry Compton, the Sir Peter Teazle, Sir Anthony Absolute, and Old Hardcastle of William Chippendale, and the Mrs. Candor of Mrs. Chippendale. I must have seen "As You Like It," having a clear vision of Compton as Touchstone, but can recall nothing else in the performance. Buckstone was a little rotund man, with a squeaking, nasal voice and merry twinkling eyes on either side of a tip-tilted nose. He was an admirable low comedian, the very embodiment of comic geniality. The apparition of his face in the wings was enough to set his audience in a roar. But he did not, like many inferior farceurs, trust entirely to his personality for his stage effects. He could not disguise his identity, but he was an actor and changed his manners with his impersonations. His Aguecheek was dry, inane, droll, and Shakespearean.

His Tony Lumpkin was a rustic hobbledehoy, loutish, prankish, selfish, cunning, yet not altogether ungenerous or unamiable. The complex elements in it were artfully harmonized, and it retained the buoyancy of youth after he was a septuagenarian. It was in such whimsical trifles as Maddison Morton's "Box and Cox" that he gave the fullest play to his natural humor.

His associate in this absurdity was Henry Compton, and the amount of fun which the pair contrived to extract from it was amazing. On the printed page the piece seems absolutely foolish and dull, but in action it is full of comic situations, which these experienced and highly trained actors elaborated and emphasized with an extraordinary wealth of varied resource. In their most extravagant moods they kept within the limits of plausibility, the intervals between their broadest strokes being filled with delicate and suggestive byplay. The general effect was helped by the contrast between their methods. Compton was tall, lean, grave, and dry as a chip, with keen, intellectual features. Buckstone was unctuous, shrill, brisk, and demonstrative, and altogether plebeian. The cooperation between them was perfect, and during their performance the merriment never slackened for an instant. The subsequent popularity of the farce, which in spite of

its silliness came to be regarded as a sort of classic, was largely, if not entirely, due to their interpretation of it, upon which all later repetitions were founded. It is the fashion nowadays to deride farce as something unworthy of our cultivated attention. But the best of it was more human and no more foolish than most of our musical comedy, and when enacted with such sincerity and executive skill as was displayed by these old Haymarket players it acquired a definite artistic value.

Chippendale, well known in New York in his younger days, was a pillar of the Haymarket company for many years. In many respects he might be compared with John Gilbert. In London he disputed preeminence in the higher comedy with Phelps and the first and second Farren. I saw him act repeatedly. He had not the inches, the bulk, the physical force, or the magnificent volcanic choler of Gilbert, but he was a finished type of the old-style player, with an expressive, attractive, mobile face, good voice, figure, and carriage. His diction was admirable, his gesture free, graceful, and significant, his manner refined and dignified. He had control of both passion and pathos and a fount of mellow humor, which, even in old age, preserved its freshness and whimsicality.

His masterpiece, perhaps, was his Sir Peter Teazle, a most vital picture of an elderly beau, a trifle precise, formal, and cynical, but thoroughly well bred and courteous, obstinate, irascible, and generous. His cynical utterances were delightful. To Lady Teazle his behavior throughout was paternal rather than conjugal, fond and wistful, not adoring. In the quarrel scene his transition from a mood of tender banter to one of passionate and disgusted protest was marked by most skilful and humorous gradations. In the screen scene he was manfully pathetic in his confidences with Joseph, exhilaratingly mischievous in his explanations to Charles, and a striking picture of surprise and mortification mingled with anger and contempt after the climactic revelation. The whole embodiment was a memorable bit of portraiture. His Sir Anthony Absolute was a companion study of almost equal merit. The part, of course, is much simpler than that of Sir Peter, and his comprehension of it was complete, but in the "frenzies," as Sir Anthony called them, he fell short of the eruptive power of either Phelps or Gilbert. As Hardcastle he was the equal of anybody at any time, a splendid specimen of the English country gentleman, simple, with a natural courtesy, free from all affectation, shrewd without suspicion, frank,

hospitable, peppery, but full of the milk of human kindness.

But these Haymarket representations, after all, were more noteworthy for their all-around efficiency than for the brilliancy of individual achievements. Each member of the company was competent for the work he had to do and fitted neatly in the general scheme. There were no loose or creaking joints in the machinery, the appropriate atmosphere was preserved from first to last, there were no awkward or painful inconsistencies. The stage managers of those days, if not themselves expert actors, were, at least, experts in the whole art of acting and of stage production, knew how things ought to be done, and could and did show the actual players how to do them. They licked tyros into shape and converted wooden supernumeraries into living human beings. They had the faculty of blending discordant details into one harmonious whole. Such men as Macready, Charles Kean, Buckstone, Ben Webster, Phelps, and John Ryder were always, to a large extent, their own stage-managers, instructing their assistants concerning the preliminaries and putting on the finishing touches themselves.

They were exacting taskmasters. A new piece was rehearsed for weeks until all the minor per-

HENRY COMPTON

E. A. SOTHERN
as "Lord Dundreary," in
"Our American Cousin"

WILLIAM CHIPPENDALE

formers could go through all the carefully prescribed evolutions with mechanical exactness, and were letter perfect. Woe to the unfortunate actor who was not on his appointed spot and instant in his speech when he was a factor in one of Macready's laboriously calculated "points." Buckstone, too, could be a martinet in these matters, realizing that rapidity and smoothness are the chief essentials of stage illusion. And he was as conscientious in the preparation of new plays as he was in that of classic masterpieces. His company, after a spell of old comedy, fell into this modern style with ready adaptability. "The Overland Route" of Tom Taylor, a clever but by no means dazzling piece, became extraordinarily effective in their hands and added greatly to the reputation of its author. The cast included, if I remember rightly, Buckstone, Compton, W. F. Howe—then in his prime—Mr. and Mrs. Chippendale, and Charles Mathews.

Equally notable was the first performance at the Haymarket of that silly but long-lived play, "An American Cousin," in which E. A. Sothern won fame and fortune as Lord Dundreary. All American theatergoers, even the youngest (as E. H. Sothern recently revived it), know something of that play and its history. But no one who did not see the elder Sothern's performance

in London in the sixties can appreciate the true artistic value of it, or understand the serious critical commendation bestowed upon it.

During the Crimean War the soldiers of the British army were allowed to grow their beards, and after peace had been proclaimed it became the fashion among the heavy "swells" of the Household Cavalry to cultivate with the mustache the long side whiskers called by the vulgar "Piccadilly weepers." Many of these warriors, the pampered darlings of aristocratic maidens, affected a languid, lackadaisical manner, and a drawling, haw-haw style of speech which was essentially contemptible and ridiculous. They were conspicuous objects in the parks and in the stalls of the theater. When civilians began to copy them they soon cut off their whiskers and talked more like men and less like donkeys. In spite of their absurdity they were polished gentlemen. Sothern perceived the comic opportunity in them when, to his disgust, he was cast originally by Laura Keene in the small part of Dundreary in "Our American Cousin" in New York, dressed it in imitation of one of these military exquisites, and resolved to play it in the spirit of caricature.

Coming on the stage at the final dress rehearsal (I knew him well and am telling the story from

his own lips), he caught his toe in the carpet and nearly fell headlong, saving himself by an improvised skip. Miss Keene saw the skip, but not the cause of it, and asked indignantly whether that was his idea of a British nobleman. He, piqued by the rebuke, replied in the affirmative, repeated the skip intentionally at the first public performance, and made the hit that led to fortune. Virtually his impersonation was a burlesque. By the time the play reached London his part had been expanded until it was the central feature and he acted it in a vein of light comedy with just enough exaggeration to impart the tang of satire to gentle caricature. So near to life did he get that *Punch* published a picture showing half a dozen cavalrymen—potential Dundrearys—in the stalls discussing their imitator on the stage. His embodiment was a veritable creation, well proportioned, consistent, finished to the nails, a most felicitous portrayal of a foolish, kindly, well-mannered, perplexed, and helpless fop. In deftness, delicacy, veracity, and mirth-provoking capacity it would compare favorably with some of the most notable achievements in comedy. Afterward I went to see him play the part in New York—not many years later—and found him indulging in all sorts of buffoonery, which was rewarded with roars and shouts of

approval. The polish, the refinement, the delightful delicacy and finish had been replaced by the cheapest of farcical expedients. When I asked him why he risked his reputation with such clowning, he replied that he had to give his audience what it wanted, that the American public had its own notions about the British aristocracy, and that his London conception would be neither understood nor accepted. Conditions have changed since then.

III

SADLER'S WELLS, SAMUEL PHELPS AND SOME OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES

It was at Sadler's Wells Theater, in the despised suburb of Islington, that the ideal work of the stock company was done in the days of my boyhood. There Samuel Phelps reigned for seventeen years, and exemplified, in a more striking way than any other manager—Macready, Kean, and Henry Irving not excepted — the readiness of the masses to support the higher drama. The old Prince of Wales's Theater, before the occupation of it by the Bancrofts, was not so disreputable a hole as "The Wells" when Phelps took it, and was in a far more promising neighborhood. Islington, indeed, was densely populous, but exceedingly poor and shabby. It abounded in small shops, taverns, cheap lodging-houses and slums, and small tradesmen, mechanics, the commoner kind of clerks, peddlers, innumerable wage-earners of different kinds, with a plentiful sprinkling of degraded "sports," constituted the great bulk of the inhabitants.

"The Wells" had been devoted to what would now be described as vaudeville, to tenth-rate boxing matches, comic concerts, acrobatic shows, and so on. It was one of the dingiest, dirtiest, and in every way most objectionable resorts imaginable.

When Phelps secured control of it and announced his intention of making it the home of the classic drama, his friends thought him insane. He was without influence or strong financial or social backing. He was well known as an actor, —but not in Islington—for he had long been the right hand of Macready, who fully realized his abilities, dreaded his rivalry, and deliberately, as he himself confessed, tried to keep him in the background, saying that he was young and could afford to wait. The selfish remark was eminently characteristic of the old actor, but there can be no doubt that the experience which Phelps gained in that prolonged service was invaluable to him in after years. I was not out of the nursery when the Sadler's Wells campaign began, and was only a biggish boy when it ended. The only representation I ever saw there was "A Midsummer Night's Dream," the excellence of which I was far too young to understand. But later on I spent many long days among the newspaper files in the old Jerusalem Chamber in the City of

London and greedily devoured the contemporary criticisms of that wonderful series of revivals, which included all the plays of Shakespeare except two or three, and of many of the old Elizabethans, Massinger, Ford, Fletcher, Otway, Marlowe, and others, to say nothing of notable modern works by such writers as Talfourd, Browning, Sheil, and Bulwer-Lytton. Of this period I can say nothing from personal knowledge—I am writing solely from memory and my own notes, with a studious avoidance of books of reference—but the historical records are open to all.

Phelps was continuously successful from the moment he first raised his curtain with a revival of "Macbeth." From his "pit" and galleries he received solid and unwavering support. His profits were not large, for his expenses were considerable and his prices low. He could not have indulged in costly spectacle, even if he had had any desire to do so; but his scenery was sufficient, his costumes accurate if inexpensive, while his company, always capable from top to bottom, included at different times most of the remaining well-known players who had served their novitiate under the Kembles, Macready, and the Keans. To the illiterate denizens of Islington, or most of them, his representations must

have been strange and phenomenal, but they hailed them with enthusiasm and soon learned to applaud them with discrimination. Before long they furnished the most expert and exacting Shakespearean audiences in London. There has never been a more striking instance of the educational power of the theater or of the natural capacity of the masses to comprehend and their willingness to pay for what is noblest and best in the drama. Phelps had virtually won his victory before the fashionable West End of the town awoke to a realization of the intellectual and dramatic feast that he was providing, and began to make pilgrimages to Islington, which elsewhere was already recognized as the Mecca of all Shakespeareans.

It was in the later sixties, when Phelps, wearying of managerial anxieties, but still in fullest vigor, had retired from the house which he had raised to enduring fame, that I had frequent opportunities of seeing him and many of his leading associates, in various London theaters, in a number of their most admired parts. Among these players were Mrs. Warner, the first Lady Macbeth at The Wells and one of Phelps's most able co-workers; Mrs. Charles Young (afterward Mrs. Hermann Vezin), Miss Atkinson, Miss Marriott, William Creswick, Henry Marston,

Fred. Robinson, James Anderson, John Ryder, and Walter Lacy, each one of them a trained actor of the first class.

In writing of Phelps I fear that I shall lay myself open to the suspicion of hyperbole, but each word shall be carefully weighed. I do not think he was endowed largely, if at all, with the divine gift of genius. He emitted no flashes of lightning, as did Edmund Kean, and revealed no such grasp of the poetic and philosophic side of Hamlet as did Edwin Booth. But it is my deliberate judgment that he was incomparably the finest actor I have ever seen, with the single exception of Salvini, who stands by himself alone. It has always been a cause of wonderment to me that, notwithstanding his great popularity, his admitted achievements, and the fervent praise lavished upon him by the most authoritative critics of his day, he should have fallen into comparative oblivion so soon after his death. Possibly it may be accounted for, partly, by two facts: one, that he was deficient in that mysterious attribute of personal fascination which confers upon some actors a notoriety altogether disproportionate to their artistic merits—the feminine admiration and gossip which deck the "matinee darling" with fictitious renown—and second, that he never gained, nor sought, admis-

sion to those charmed social circles in the rays of whose favor Charles Kean loved to bask.

Phelps had none of the gloss of fashion upon him. Off the stage he conveyed the impression of being a rough, austere man. Yet he was kindly and humorous, although his humor was of a somewhat saturnine order. He spent his youth at the printer's case, until success in amateur theatricals led him to seek fortune on the stage. Years of arduous and unrewarded struggle followed, and these hardened him. An industrious student and indefatigable worker himself, he was a stern taskmaster when master of his own theater. He could be tolerant of striving inability, but not of slovenliness. In person, when I knew him, he presented a vigorous, military figure, of medium height, broad, spare, and athletic. His head was well set upon his shoulders. His face was powerful and peculiar rather than pleasing. It was set in hard lines, though remarkably mobile and flexible when he was acting. A high forehead, framed in long black locks covering the ears, surmounted a pair of heavy, straight eyebrows, slanting downward from the center, over small, deep-set, reflective eyes, which could, upon occasion, open very widely. The mouth was large, thin-lipped, and resolute, and the jaws uncommonly broad and square. In repose the whole

countenance was rigid and inexpressive, but in action it was a changeable mask of rare plasticity, a fit implement for a player of unrivaled versatility.

Many stories are extant concerning the Protean gifts of Garrick, but if they rest upon no surer foundations than those of the manifestly exaggerated estimates of him as a Shakespearean devotee, they are scarcely entitled to unlimited credit. Within the last century, at any rate, no player on the English-speaking stage has demonstrated a versatility even approaching that of Phelps. The best contemporary critics differed in opinion as to whether he was superior in comedy or in tragedy. All agreed that in certain tragic and comic characters he had no rival. My own view is that he was equally good in both departments, and I wish that I could enter into fuller detail than the time and space at my disposal will permit to prove my case. I saw him more than twenty times in all in eighteen widely contrasted characters, which, though they formed but a small part of his extraordinary repertory, certainly afforded convincing evidence of his universality. These were King Lear, Macbeth, Othello, King John, Henry IV, Falstaff, Justice Shallow, Wolsey, Sir Peter Teazle, Sir Anthony Absolute, Sir Pertinax McSycophant, Manfred,

John Bull, Mr. Oakley in "The Jealous Wife," King James and Trapbois in Halliday's "King of Scots," Bertuccio, and Richelieu. His Lear (I am speaking of the English-speaking stage only) was one of the most satisfying interpretations of that unactable conception that I have seen. It was ruggedly majestic in the opening scenes, tempestuous in passion, and infinitely pitiful in the shifting humors of its degradation and despair. In vocal and elocutionary resource it was superb. It combined the strength of Forrest with the subtle intelligence of Edwin Booth. The latter player, in later years, often reminded me of Phelps in his treatment of the mad scenes with Edgar, the Fool and Kent, and sometimes excelled him in ingenuity of emphasis. Possibly, too, he sounded a richer chord of pathos than did the English actor in the recognition of Cordelia, but in passages of tragic force, in the curse, for instance, and the address to the elements, and in sustained realism, Phelps carried off the palm. He distanced such meritorious performers as E. L. Davenport, Lawrence Barrett, and John McCullough.

As Macbeth he was less imaginative, poetic, and pathetic than Booth (I am thinking of the latter's collapse after the apparition of Banquo), but more robust and terrible and, to my mind,

SADLER'S WELLS THEATER

(From an old print)

closer to the spirit of Shakespeare. His Thane had fits of remorseful and sullen despondency, but was neither sentimental nor hag-ridden. He might be temporarily unnerved and shaken—as by the ghostly visitation at the banquet—but he rallied quickly and was himself again, bloody, bold, and resolute. He was a rough warrior of his period, prompt, sagacious, fierce, and, in the main, unscrupulous, though he was not devoid of all sense of honor or wholly immune against qualms of conscience. His utterance of the words "To-morrow, as he purposes," in reply to his wife's insidious question concerning Duncan, was charged with deadly meaning, making it plain that his mind was one with hers and that he needed no sharp application of the spur to his intent, while his subsequent reflection, "He's here in double trust," ending with the decision, "We will proceed no further in this business," suggested full comprehension of the situation and the possible consequences of his treachery rather than any spiritual revolt from the enormity of the crime itself. His concluding outburst, "I dare do all that may become a man; he who dares more is none," with the emphasis upon the "dare" rather than upon the "more," showed that the contemptuous chiding of his wife had ended his compunction.

In the famous dagger soliloquy Phelps was deeply impressive. He suggested horror rather than terror, the horror of a physical courage tensely braced to meet the shock of an incalculable menace. The wonderful lines were spoken with a power of descriptive emphasis and a tonal beauty worthy of Salvini himself or the elder Bellew. The actor held the audience in a spell. In his remorseful fit after the murder, in which, like Macready and others, he followed the traditional business, the daggers clicking like castanets in his palsied hands, he did not, as so many other players have elected to do at this point, reveal himself an absolute craven. Unstrung, in reaction after the strain, he yet maintained a measure of self-control, and amid all his temporary bewilderment and dread there was an undertone of determination. His "Look on't again, I dare not," was closely akin to "I will not," as consistency plainly demands. And it may be noted here that the complete collapse of many Macbeths at this juncture is absolutely irreconcilable with the composure with which they receive Macduff a few minutes afterward, almost before they could have had time to "wash the filthy witness" from their hands. Phelps—and perhaps Macready before him—evidently perceived this absurdity. At all events his conception of a strong

Macbeth, imperious even in dealings with the witches, was maintained from first to last with a fine consistency. And if it were more notable for its bold outlines than for the accumulation of detail with which some of his successors—Booth and Irving, for instance—have embroidered it, it never attempted to substitute intellectual subtleties for tragic expression. Here was a Macbeth capable of the crimes, the furies, and the desperation ascribed to him, and no subsequent impersonation of the part has been equal to it in justness of proportion, vigor, or picturesqueness.

The Othello of Phelps was a sound, straightforward performance, with some imposing outbursts of passion and moments of melting pathos, but it attained to no dizzy heights. It was an eminently satisfactory bit of Shakespearean work, but it was not inspired. The most remarkable feature of it, perhaps, was the elocution. The speech to the Senate may have been delivered with more oratorical and Oriental grace—Edwin Booth shone greatly in it—but it has never, in my hearing, been spoken with such soldierly simplicity or such natural dignity as it was by Phelps. And his delivery of the "Farewell" speech was exquisite in its melody and pathos. As a whole the impersonation followed standard

lines, though the technical execution and the physical power of it raised it to a level much above the ordinary standard.

His King John, according to contemporary critics, was a copy, though not a servile one, of Macready's famous impersonation. It is reasonable to believe that he followed the main lines of his great predecessor's conception pretty closely, and I shall not ask for him the credit of their invention. But his copy, if copy it was, was one which must have reproduced most of the virtues of the original. It was a most vivid sketch of this shifty, cruel, treacherous, and ambitious prince. He gave ringing effect to the bold defiance of the Pope and the French King, enacted the temptation scene with Hubert with consummate craft, and the death scene with ghastly and pitiful fidelity.

His Wolsey, too, almost inevitably, was constructed upon established precedents, but it was finished with masterly skill. It had little in common with the ascetic, intellectual prelate of Henry Irving. Arrogant, curt, and imperious in speech and action, he had much more of the statesman than the priest about him, except in the matter of his robes, his whole aspect and carriage being suggestive of his humble origin, justifying, in some degree, the epithet of "butcher's cur" ap-

plied to him by Buckingham. But it was a vital, formidable, and dominant personality that he presented. It was in his closing scenes, of course, that he created his most striking effects. Even after the crushing rebuke of him by the King, he abated no jot of his pugnacious attitude in the encounter with the nobles sent to demand from him the resignation of his offices, and his gift of biting, sarcastic speech—one of his many notable histrionic furnishings—gave deadly point to his barbed replies. Being alone, he muttered bitterly, "So, farewell to the little good ye bear me," and then, after a brief pause of melancholy reflection, entered meditatively upon that famous soliloquy which, whether or not Fletcher wrote it, is one of the brightest gems in the play. No one who has ever heard Phelps speak it will forget the music, the pathos, or the passionate yearning with which he filled it. And his final charge to Cromwell was almost equally memorable as an example of the choicest declamation.

IV

MORE OF SAMUEL PHELPS IN SHAKESPEAREAN AND OTHER IMPERSONATIONS

In one of the last Shakespearean plays in which I saw Phelps' "Henry IV.," he offered one of his amazing exhibitions of versatility, doubling the parts of the King and Justice Shallow. His impersonation of the dying Bolingbroke, broken by the storms of state, was a thoughtful and finished bit of portraiture—as was each of his countless creations—but presented few stirring dramatic opportunities and may be dismissed briefly. But it was worth a long journey to hear him read the invocation to sleep. All the melody, imagination, and pictorial power of those splendid lines found expression in the varied intonations of his superb voice, which rose and fell in enchanting cadences, in their fullest volume almost rivaling the "rude, imperious surge" itself. He did some noble work also in the crown scene with the Prince of Wales. But his preeminence as an actor was displayed when, after making his exit as the King—a dignified, regal figure — by one door, he reentered, through

another, transformed, as if by magic, into the wizened, smirking, garrulous, pretentious Shallow. The art of "makeup," of course, accounted for part of the mystery, but most of it was due to sheer mimetic intuition. The metamorphosis was complete. It was only by his facial lineaments that the identity of the actor was betrayed. In bulk, gait, manner of speech, there was nothing to suggest it. The big, manly voice was turning again toward childish treble, and the utterance—dislocated and broken, shrill, voluble, hesitant, pompous, or tetchy—was a most faithful counterfeit of senile chatter.

In the simulation of the externals of old age there was not, of course, anything especially remarkable. Any fairly competent actor is equal to it. John Gilbert was famous as an "old man" almost before he had a reputation as a young one. But the creation of a series of distinct types of old age—the invention and perpetuation of peculiar attributes for each conception—that is a very different affair—and Phelps's gallery of old men, as will be seen, was crowded with diverse portraitures. It would be easy to make too much of the disguise, the expert theatrical side of his Shallow. The precious artistic quality of it resided in the vitalization of the Shakespearean humor, the humor so patent to the reader in his

study, so elusive to the actor on the boards. What intelligent theatergoer but has been amazed or angered, possibly disillusioned, by the tiresomeness before the footlights of the fools and clowns with whom, on the printed page, he had been enchanted? Phelps's Shallow was a living human being, who might well have been the actual embodiment of his creator's ideal. Whether you laughed with him or at him, he kept you constantly amused. With unfailing ingenuity the actor solved the puzzles occasionally presented by the dialogue, giving it cohesion and sequence, and applying finishing touches to a consistent individuality. His interpretation may not always have been the right one, but it was always adroit, plausible, and appropriate, and even if the conception was flavored by a considerable infusion of his own humor, which was apt to be dry and subtle, the value of it was not diminished.

After his Shallow, his Falstaff ("Henry IV") —antipodal to it in almost every respect—naturally comes to mind. At The Wells he used to play also the Falstaff of "The Merry Wives." That I never saw him do, nor am I sorry. In the early and true Falstaff he was delightful, being far in advance of all contemporary rivals with the possible exception of Hackett. Some of his critics, comparing him with Stephen Kemble,

SAMUEL PHELPS
as "Hamlet"

MISS GLYN
as "The Queen"

SAMUEL PHELPS
as "Macbeth"

who had a virtual monopoly of the character during the greater part of his career, complained of his lack of unction. So far as my personal experience goes, unctuous humor is rarely a characteristic of lean, spare men, but this may not be a physiological fact. It is true that Phelps's humor was not unctuous. It was not of the oleaginous, luscious, or Bacchic order. As a rule it was hard, dry, and snappy, but it could also be broad and mellow as old port. His Falstaff might have been even better than it was, perhaps, if it had exuded more of the essence of the sack with which it was supposed to be full, but it was a masterly assumption, bold in effect and minute in finish, and what it may have lacked in liquorishness it more than made up in intellect. In "make-up" it was most felicitous. By the aid of paint and hair the somewhat lantern-jawed face of the actor was made to assume a round and rubicund aspect, while his fictitious bulk was so cleverly distributed that his proportions, though abnormal, seemed natural. Many performers—Beerbohm Tree was one of them—endow the fat knight with a protuberance so vast as to be destructive of all illusion. Phelps's Falstaff was, at least, a human possibility. I can see him now, in my mind's eye, apostrophizing Bardolph, cajoling the hostess, or exchanging broadsides

with the mad Prince and Poins in Eastcheap, or waddling, perspiring and breathless, on Salisbury Plain, chuckling contentedly over the fact that he "had misused the King's press most damnably."

No point in the racy dialogue escaped him. Vocal and facial eloquence were alike admirable. The crescendo in his swaggering relation of his adventures with the "men in buckram"—with its skilful undertone of plaintive reproach against the confederates who had deserted him—was extraordinarily comic, and nothing could be much more amusing than his artful recovery from the confusion wrought in him by the Prince's plain tale, than his feigned indignation and his uneasy chuckle developing into a roar of laughter as he regained his effrontery, and cried, "By the Lord, I knew ye, lads, as well as he that made you!" He was at his very best, too, in the delivery of the soliloquies on the field of battle, before and after the killing of Percy. In no way did he attempt to idealize the character, to gloss over its coarseness, its selfishness, its mendacity, or its cowardice, but he contrived to convey the impression of a vagabond roisterer who had been a gentleman once, and who might have lived and died in respectability if circumstances, and his inclinations, had not proved too strong for him.

There is not much to be said about Phelps's Manfred. When the Drury Lane managers had selected Byron's noble, mystic, and gloomy poem as a fit subject for glittering spectacle, they realized that the piece itself, being hopelessly undramatic, would have little or no attraction for the general public unless some notable actor was engaged to reinforce the scenery. Phelps, ever zealous in the cause of the literary drama, undertook the task, and his superb declamation of the lines—for there was little acting to do—helped to make the show a great success. He did not, however, reveal in it any new phase of his talent. But as Richelieu, in Bulwer-Lytton's over-sentimentalized and artificial but imaginative and stirring romance, he shone with great luster. It is unquestionable that his impersonation was modeled after that of Macready, whom he supported as Joseph, but his mastery of cynical humor and pathos, and his gift of characterization, marked it with distinct individuality. It is probable that he fell short of the intellectual idealism with which Macready is said to have ennobled the part, but it is difficult to believe that his illustrious predecessor could have excelled him on the theatrical and dramatic side, in harmony of conception, vigor or delicacy of finish, beauty of elocution or electrical power in the

various crises. I have seen many eminent actors as Richelieu, but none of them—except Edwin Booth, to whom we shall come presently—can be mentioned in the same category with Phelps. In the grim humor of the opening interviews with De Mauprat, in paternal tenderness to Julie, in the cajolery of Joseph or Huguet, in the contrasting moods of the chamber scene, in the exhortation to François, in the passionate exaltation of the defiance of Baradas, in the triumphant mockery of the final act, he was a little bit more effective, more vital, and more reasonable than any other Richelieu I have seen.

In the far inferior play of "The Fool's Revenge" (Tom Taylor's) he, as Bertuccio, was at least the equal of Edwin Booth in the frenzied agony of his appeal to the abductors of his daughter, at the doors of the ducal chamber, and, it seems to me, superior even to him in emphasizing the venomous humor of which the part is so largely compounded. He used a different version of the play from that commonly employed by Booth, for he appeared in more than one scene as a dignified gentleman, in ordinary Venetian costume—without deformity or cap and bells—with his daughter, Fiordelisa, who was supposed to know nothing of the humiliating disguise which her father had assumed for his purpose of ven-

geance. The quality of the play, as I remember it, was not greatly affected by this variation, which did, however, give the actor a chance of appearing in a double character, as it were, an opportunity of which Phelps was prompt to seize the advantage.

As an interpreter of high or eccentric comedy Phelps was as proficient as in tragedy and romantic drama. As Sir Peter Teazle, he disputed the palm with Chippendale or the second Farren. In America his rivals would have been John Gilbert and William Warren. Leading English critics thought his humor too hard and dry for the part and found him too mechanical. He certainly was mechanical in the business with Charles, immediately preceding the overthrow of the screen, a business which he copied from the first Farren, who may have inherited it from King, and which has been adopted with more or less fidelity by many successive Sir Peters; and there can be no question of the dryness of his humor. Whether that quality is inconsistent with the character of "a crusty old bachelor" is a question which need not now be argued. Personally I could discover nothing aggressively mechanical in the action of his Sir Peter, although it exhibited the proper formality of the period, and the precision that comes with assured skill.

It lacked a certain amiability which characterized Chippendale's embodiment—in its unvexed moments—and was, perhaps, somewhat too hard-headed and astute for an elderly swain who had shown so little worldly wisdom in his love making, but it was consistent and persistently amusing. Every point in the witty lines was driven home.

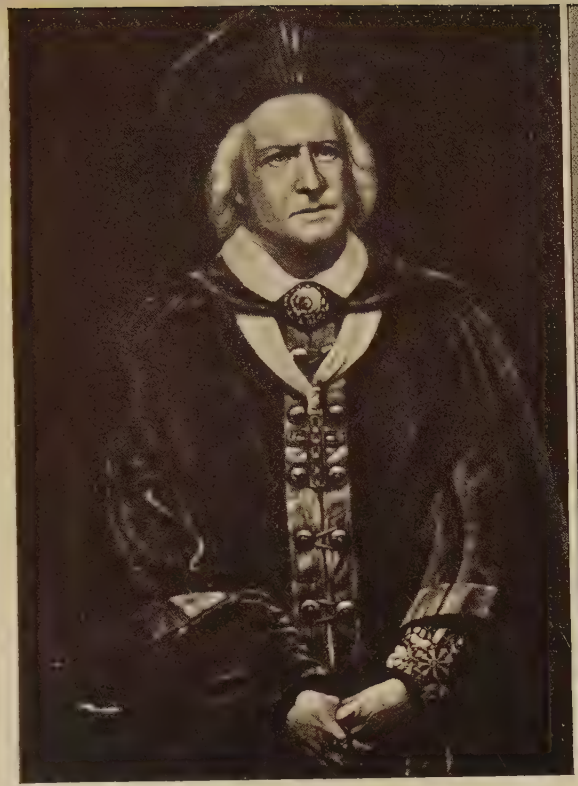
But his Sir Peter was not the equal of his Sir Anthony Absolute. The latter was a part thoroughly congenial to his masterly style and natural temperament—he was a man of generous but fiery nature—and he played it with a whole-souled enthusiasm. Chippendale, who was also famous in the part, had the humor and the technique, but not the acerbity or the power. John Gilbert was his only rival. I will not attempt to institute comparisons between the two with the idea of deciding which of them was the better. They were not alike, but they were very nearly equal. The choler of both was magnificent. Phelps was brisker in movement, more manifestly peppery, than Gilbert, but in the latter's leisurely gait and sullen brow there was always the menace of impending thunder. In the finish and power of either conception there was little to choose. But Gilbert, with all his broad efficiency, could not have played successfully in Sir Pertinax

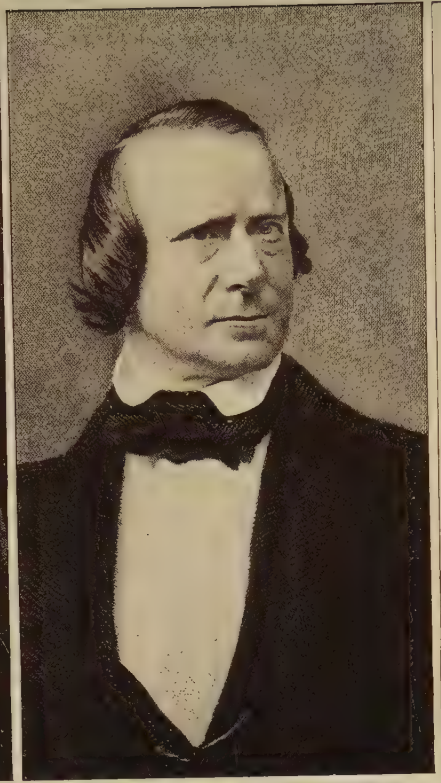
MacSycophant, the hero of Macklin's old comedy, "The Man of the World." Of this Phelps made one of his masterpieces, an impersonation to take rank with the greatest achievements of the stage.

The comedy itself possesses no extraordinary merit, but the central figure is a vital bit of satirical writing, which makes very exacting demands upon the comic and tragic powers of the interpreting actor. Briefly, Sir Pertinax is an unscrupulous, heartless, miserly hypocrite, who has achieved wealth and station by his mean subserviency and his disregard of every decent and honorable instinct. Finally, all his schemes fail, his self-degradation recoils upon him, and his end is as tragic as that of Sir Giles Overreach. The fact that the part is in the Scotch dialect increases its difficulty. Of the dialect Phelps was a complete master—he used to play Rob Roy and Bailie Nicoll Jarvie in Edinburgh—and he also had the comic and the emotional power. His Sir Pertinax was a combination of humorous and terrible reality, a wonderfully composite study in which shameless greed and cunning, inflexible purpose, and jealous hatred were artfully suggested beneath an affectation of complacent humility. The man had the suppleness, the sleekness, the stealth, and the innate savagery of that domesticated tiger, the cat. There is one notably

effective speech in the play, in which Sir Pertinax unfolds to the hero—his nephew, whom he despises and detests on account of his humane and manly qualities—the policy of his own life, the secret, as he boasts, of his prosperity and power. It was by "booing" (bowing), and by booing only, in all imaginable circumstances, that he had disarmed hostility, averted suspicion, hidden guile, and misled sagacity. The cynical effrontery with which Phelps declaimed this speech, the variety of emphasis and gesture with which he illustrated and enforced his argument, and the eloquence of his facial play as he watched the effect of it, were extraordinary. And the effect was due entirely to art, not in any way to his individual personality. In the scene of his final exposure and overthrow, the fury of his despair and of his insensate and impotent rage was appalling. The only paroxysmal outbursts to compare with it that I have witnessed upon the English-speaking stage were in the Pescara of Edwin Booth and the Sir Giles Overreach of E. L. Davenport.

Admirable as Phelps was in the Colman comedies, "John Bull" and "The Jealous Wife," it is not necessary to dwell upon either impersonation. "John Bull" owed its one-time popularity to its admixture of patriotic and sentimental





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SAMUEL PHELPS

as "Cardinal Wolsey," in "Henry VIII"

as "Macsycophant"

claptrap, to which he imparted temporary value by his simplicity, sincerity, and vigor, while the part of Oakley did not reveal him in any new light. But his expert handling of it made it amusing, which was more than Charles Coghlan could do when he essayed it in New York, many years later. But this cursory review of his achievements must not close without some reference to the characteristic display of versatility and finished artistry which he afforded in "The King of Scots," Halliday's dramatization of "The Fortunes of Nigel." In this spectacular melodrama, he furnished two most striking studies—the word is used advisedly—one of the wise, foolish, weak, timid, opinionated King James, and the other of the wretched old miser, Trapbois. They were as clearly cut and as antipodal as his Henry IV and Shallow. His James, who might have stept out of a canvas by Van Dyke, was delightful in his pedantic humors, his frequent lapses from royal dignity, his rapid alternations between frolicsome and querulous moods, his braggadocio, and his comic timorousness.

From heels to plume he was alive. In Trapbois the actor, shrunk to half his girth, presented a terrible realization of senile avarice and vice. In the quavering voice, bent and wizened form,

and tottering limbs, there was not a trace of the serio-comic monarch who had just quitted the stage, nor was it easy to assure oneself of the actor's identity. The illusion of a double personality was absolute. Part of it, of course, was due to theatrical device, but much more of it to sheer mimetic art. The characters in themselves were insignificant, but the fortune of any player would be made who could vitalize either of them as Phelps did, and his achievement is related here as evidence of the histrionic efficiency produced by the old-time stock-company training. His impersonations amounted to hundreds, but nothing would be gained by giving a full list of them, even if I had it. But a few of them, in which he won special renown, may be mentioned at haphazard. His Bottom, the Weaver, was the most celebrated on record, and won the enthusiastic commendation of accomplished critics. His whole production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" has been characterized as one of the most enlightened and poetic in theatrical annals. Played largely behind gauze, in a dim, roseate light, and without much sharply accentuated action, it resembled the fantastic happenings of a dream, and lent to the fairy episodes a highly appropriate and charming insubstantiality. The painful discrepancy between the manifest solidity

of earthly actors and the supposed immateriality of the shapes they occupy was thus, to a great extent, avoided. He won other triumphs, as Dogberry, as Malvolio, as Lord Ogleby, Sir Giles Overreach, Alfred Evelyn, and Sir Edward Mortimer, in "The Iron Chest." He won approbation as Benedick, and made a star part of Christopher Sly, remaining upon the stage throughout the entire performance of "The Taming of the Shrew," and heightening the effect by his appropriate byplay. He had his failures. His Hamlet was heavy and his Iago unimaginative, but no player of his generation was more completely master of his trade.

Macready I saw once, long after his retirement. When Phelps made his first appearance, at the West End, as King John, he occupied the seat of honor in the royal box, and evidently followed the performance with the liveliest interest. He was liberal with applause, and when his old leading man, having been called before the curtain, bowed to him, stood up and bent low in answering salutation. He was a handsome figure. His tall form was still erect, and he carried his head—with the long, white locks framing the strong, stern face—very proudly. Looking at him, it was easy to understand how unfitted he was by temperament for the vexatious life of the

theater. Soon after this Helen Faucit (Lady Theodore Martin) returned to the stage for a single performance of Juliet, for some charitable object, and I was lucky enough to get a seat.

She was then fifty-three years old and made no effort to conceal the signs of middle age. She wore bunches of curls, I remember, over her ears, with side and back-combs, in Spanish fashion. Whether they were the proper thing or not in Verona in the days of the Montagus and Capulets, I can not say, but the style was not becoming to her, and there was nothing in her face or person to suggest the fascinating and impassioned Juliet. Nor was there much apparent endeavor to simulate either youth or passion in her impersonation, which, to me, was a grievous disappointment. But, nevertheless, it had some notable qualities. It had the large, free, significant gesture and the fine diction of the old school. She recited rather than acted, the balcony scene, but her reading of the lines was delicious. With the nurse she was, to my thinking, self-conscious, artificial, and affected, but that coaxing episode had not then been overburdened with ridiculous pantomime, as it has been since, by the grace of "professors" (as they truly are in one sense), in so-called dramatic schools. In the potion scene she exhibited im-

pressive declamatory power, giving each word and clause its value, and artfully saving her voice for the climaxes, when she poured it forth in magnificent volume, without degenerating into shrieking, inarticulate vehemence. It was a fine piece of work, thoroughly intelligent and artistic, but not inspired. She did not thrill me with a sense of clairvoyant horror, as did Stella Colas. But she had not the spell of youth and beauty to aid her. She undoubtedly satisfied the fastidious taste of Macready in the early days, when she adored him, and he, not insusceptible to her charms, was her preceptor and guide. It was fortunate, perhaps, that she died before the latest edition of his diaries—showing how he derided her abilities as soon as her friendly intimacy with him had ceased—was published. She was spared a rude shock to a cherished memory.

V

BENJAMIN WEBSTER, CHARLES FECHTER, AND OTHERS

In later days I became acquainted with the work of many of the distinguished actors who had contributed to the fame of Sadler's Wells under the management of Phelps. Without exception, I believe, they were the product of stock companies in London or the provinces. Prominent among them was Mrs. Warner, a tragic actress of notable equipment, both physical and artistic. In such parts as Lady Macbeth, the Duchess of Malfi, or Queen Katharine, she was the equal of Charlotte Cushman, of whom she had the advantage in stature and feminine charm. Miss Marriott was another sterling actress of the robust order. She was a large woman, somewhat masculine in voice and manner. She was the only actress, in my experience (I never saw Cushman in any of her masculine assumptions), who could play male parts without an obvious betrayal of her sex. Her Hamlet, for which she had the shape and the inches, was, to my mind,

a capable performance, not in the least distinguished, but fulfilling traditional requirements. It was intelligent, interesting, and sufficiently forceful, and was successful all over England. There is a saying that no player ever failed altogether in Hamlet. I can specify one who did, and that was the illustrious Sarah Bernhardt, whose impersonation was a presumptuous, ignorant, and abominable travesty, with the feminine eternally dominant.

Another fine actress who played many important characters, in tragedy and comedy, at The Wells, with much success was Miss Glynn. She was a woman of graceful proportions and potent facial charm. Her greatest success, perhaps, was won in the difficult part of Cleopatra, an impersonation admitted to be the best of her era. Certainly I know of none superior or equal to it. She portrayed a woman who might be supposed capable of bewitching a grizzled warrior and statesman, a leader in the city and the camp, a past master in diplomatic wiles and the lures of a splendid and profligate society. Her Queen was something more than an Oriental siren, luxurious, whimsical, selfish, cruel, and wanton. Even in her hero worship she was royal, and suggested something of the subtlety and mystery of the Serpent of Old Nile. She

was a prize worth the winning even by a sated epicure.

William Creswick was for some time a rival of Phelps, but, lacking initiative and adaptability, he fell behind in the race. As he grew older, he was a lamentable illustration of the pass to which a blind devotion to tradition may bring an actor. He became terribly dull and wooden, and lost his hold upon the public. Yet, in his prime, before he was a slave to the worst kind of mannerisms, he was a most correct and powerful player. He did yeoman's work with Phelps. Henry Marston was a conspicuous example of the value of sound training. He was handicapped at first by an imperfect utterance and a weak, unmanageable voice, but he learned to be one of the best speakers, as well as one of the most trustworthy actors, upon the stage, and for years was an able coadjutor of Phelps. His presence was dignified, and his manner graceful, and he was of great value in characters requiring a note of personal refinement. He delivered the dying speech of the Duke of Buckingham, in "Richard III," which is often omitted nowadays for the lack of any actor able to speak it, with extraordinary impressiveness.

James Anderson, who lived to a great age, was for years a prominent leading tragedian, and

acted both with Phelps and Macready. He was endowed with lofty stature and a fine voice, advantages which were supplemented by expert knowledge of his art. He had, too, a measure of versatility, which permitted him a considerable range in romance and melodrama, but the broadly comic vein was not well developed in him, and his mimetic faculty was limited. In the provinces he enjoyed high repute in a wide repertory of heroic characters, including Macbeth, Othello, Ingomar, and Lear. He could be tempestuous or ardent, but in pathetic passages he was dolorous rather than melting. As Joseph Surface he was admirable. Sleek, elegant, courteous, plausible, and deprecatory, he might easily have imposed upon a shrewder personage than Sir Peter. I saw him act this character in one of the most remarkable casts ever collected in the history of the comedy. Phelps was the Sir Peter, Mrs. Hermann Vezin the Lady Teazle, Buckstone the Sir Benjamin, Henry Compton the Crabtree, Walter Lacy the Charles, Mrs. Chippendale the Mrs. Candor, Henry Howe the Rowley, J. L. Toole the Moses, and Benjamin Webster the Snake. This was at Drury Lane, for the benefit of the General Theatrical Fund.

Walter Lacy, a stalwart and graceful man, with a handsome and vivacious countenance, was

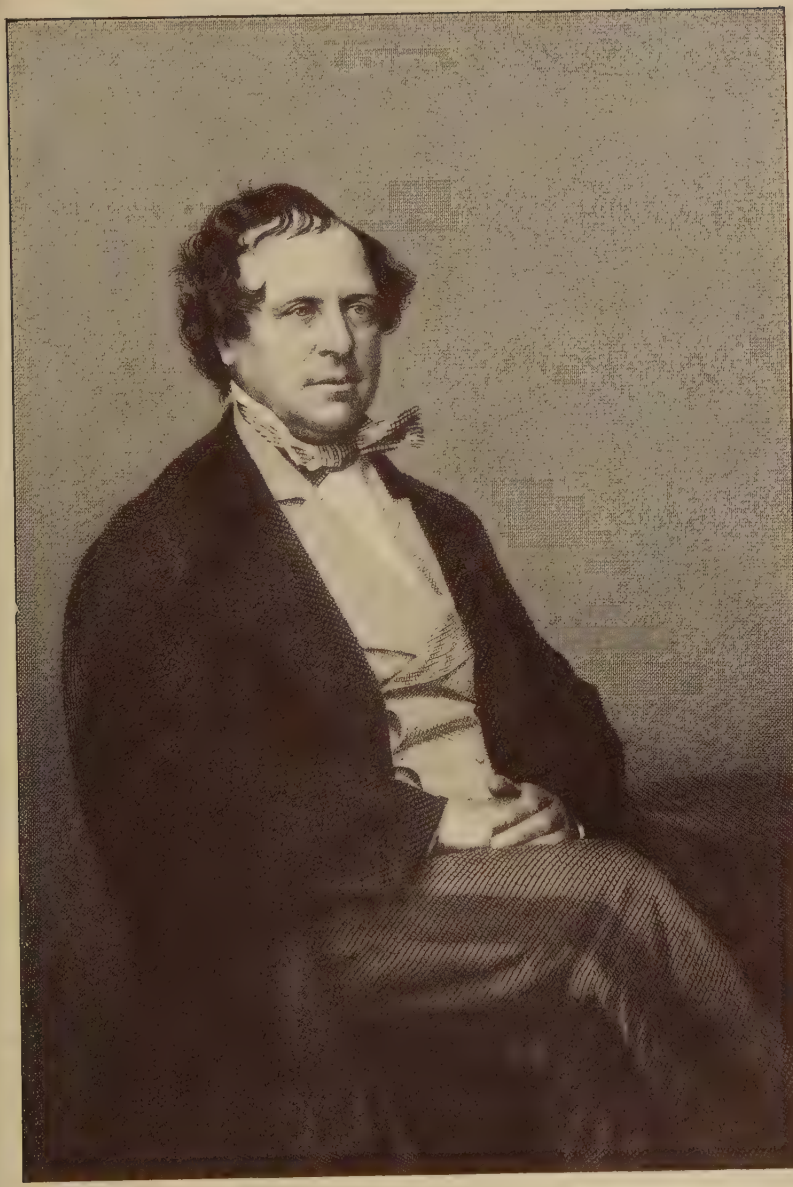
superb in genteel and serious comedy. He could be dazzling and vigorous, but he had no spark of tragic passion in him. His Prince of Wales, in "Henry IV," was the embodiment of reckless, irresponsible gayety, of humorous mischief without a trace of malice in it. A merry devil was in his eye and laughter on his lips. The boyish make-believe of his Falstaffian scenes was inimitable. The exhilaration and spontaneity of the entire impersonation gave extraordinary vitality to the Shakespearean invention. But in his most roystering moods he never quite forgot his princely dignity. He said and did scandalous things without losing his air of high breeding, and at the end of the play, before and after the death of Hotspur, bore himself as a gallant and courtly gentleman. His Charles Surface was a most engaging young scapegrace, brimful of animal spirits, a profligate rather than a debauchee, indifferent to everything but the gayety of the moment, audacious, cynical, frank, generous, and—except in the matter of his creditors—honorable. The only modern impersonations comparable with it were those of Charles Coghlan and Lester Wallack. Benjamin Webster, a septuagenarian at the time of which I am speaking, was a famous Snake, a character of which he was a very early representative. Small as the part

is, he made it conspicuous by the polished, reptilian manner of his delineation. The obsequious insolence of it was at once fascinating and repellent.

Webster is now chiefly remembered—when he is remembered at all—as the manager of the Adelphi when that house—which I haunted for several years—was recognized as the favorite abode of melodrama. But he was a notable man in more ways than one, and had an adventurous, stormy, but, on the whole, prosperous career. As an actor he was first rate in many humorous, emotional, and eccentric parts. As a manager he was capable, astute, and occasionally enterprising; but he had the box-office ever in his mind, was not over-ambitious or over-scrupulous; as a man he was humorous, convivial, capricious, and stubborn. He had a coterie of close friends and many bitter enemies. Macready, who frequently played under his management, detested him and poured out the vials of his literary wrath upon him, and he was often in trouble with other eminent performers, but remained a power in the theatrical profession for many years, and knew how to please his public. I saw him act very often, but it is not necessary to mention more than four of his impersonations as samples of his quality. In the old melodrama of "The

Dead Heart" he played Robert Landry with really wonderful effect. His portrayal of the patriarchal prisoner rescued from the Bastille, with every faculty of body and mind paralyzed by long incarceration, with glazed and unspeculative eyes, and blank, waxen face, was infinitely pathetic, and his slow awakening from his torpor was accomplished with innumerable delicate, subtle, realistic strokes.

In the later acts, his manifestation of vengeful purpose and cold implacability was maintained with a restrained forcefulness which was exceedingly artistic and striking. His Triplet, in "Masks and Faces"—he was the original creator of the character—set the standard for all future performances. It was an excellently human sketch, full of wistful, plaintive humor and genuine pathos, and was most elaborately wrought. His skill upon the fiddle added to its realism. And in the comely and vivacious Mrs. Sterling he had an ideal Peg Woffington, while his company was capable of giving full effect to the artificial style and racy dialogue of Charles Reade's comedy. (Mrs. Sterling lived and maintained her dramatic activities to a great age and was a prime favorite of the pubic. One of her latest triumphs was as the Nurse in Irving's revival of "Romeo and Juliet.") Another of Webster's



BENJAMIN WEBSTER

notable achievements was his Joey Ladle, the old cellar man, in Wilkie Collins's "No Thoroughfare." It was a veritable creation, heavy, lethargic, misty with the moldy atmosphere of the vaults about it, and a savor of the cobwebs and fungi among which it was supposed to have its habitat.

This strange but always vital figure Webster endowed with a sort of subterranean humor, rumbling and mellow, and a capacity for dog-like devotion to the heroine which, as the play proceeded, sharpened his faculties, aroused his dormant energies, and converted him into a man of action. The progressive stages of this development were marked with a cleverness akin to that displayed in the resuscitated Landry. In "One Touch of Nature," a little gem of its kind, he was supremely good as the fond old father. His simple naturalness was exquisite and his pathos irresistible, and in the ultimate recognition he touched a note of rapturous passion. His memory is worth preserving. He was not a great manager, for he produced no great plays—except when he made special engagements with men like Macready, and often failed to fulfil his obligations — but his regular company was good and his presentations of modern pieces, melodrama and farce, admirable. It was solely the

excellence of the acting that made the lasting success of such crude pieces as "The Flowers of the Forest" possible.

The Victorian theater was in a parlous condition when Charles Fechter burst like a meteor upon the stage. The simile is not inept, for his full radiance did not last long. He won renown in America in later years, but only those who saw him during his early London career can rightfully appreciate his true genius. Therefore I speak of him here. When he reached the States excesses had robbed him of his figure, enfeebled his activities, and dimmed, though they never extinguished, his fire. As I first knew him, he was a model of athletic vigor, and grossness had not blurred the fine and expressive lines of his face. Genius is a much abused word, especially in theatrical criticism, where it is often applied to performers of very ordinary intelligence. But Fechter exhibited indisputable genius in romantic if not in the highest form of tragic and poetic drama. He was an extraordinary man in many respects. Born in London of French and German parents, he spoke three languages with equal fluency, if not with equal felicity. His English pronunciation was excellent, but he never could rid himself of a Continental intonation.

He won public recognition first in Paris, at the

Porte St. Martin, where he was hailed as a worthy successor of Fréderic Lemâitre. It was a bold stroke when he challenged national prejudice by acting Hamlet in London, but the notoriety he gained from the fierce press controversy that raged around him insured his success and paved the way for his future brilliant campaign at the Lyceum. Those controversies I have no notion of reviving. But nothing could be much more ridiculous than the objurgations hurled against him because he saw fit to wear a blond wig against all precedent. He had his defenders, who asked whether the Danes were not a fair-haired race, but most of the dramatic pundits and all the old actors were overwhelmingly against him. But the people flocked to see him and he had a staunch and influential backer in Miss Burdett-Coutts—she was not Lady Coutts then—ever the friend of all sorts of artists, who sang his praises in high places and took all her friends to see him.

I saw his Hamlet in its first bloom and in its decline. In general conception and execution it was, in many respects, I think, the most satisfactory in my experience. It fell short of Edwin Booth's in intellectuality and meditative and poetic charm, and of Forbes-Robertson's in idealism and oratorical precision, but it was more

human than either of them and offered a better blend of the various elements in the character. It had the dignity of the prince, the polish of the courtier, the melancholy of a harassed and vacillating mind, the culture of a scholar and artist, and the ardor of a lover. No actor of modern times has infused so much of romance into the tragedy as did Fechter in his scenes with Ophelia. Even in his renunciation of her, the dominant note was that of a passionate yearning. In the mournful cadences of his voice, in his bearing and gesture, he suggested the anguish of a devotion cruelly shocked by the shattering of an ideal. In the mockery of the play scene he was the lover still, and the proclamation of his passion in the ranting challenge to Laertes in the churchyard glowed with volcanic fire. And he excelled all other actors of the past known to me in the thrilling vehemence of his self-reproach in the lines beginning, "Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!"

In the traditional business of the character he had been thoroughly drilled by J. M. H. Bellew and others, and—except in the matter of his wig—he attempted no very startling innovation. It was in the pictorial quality of his acting, the unrestrained freedom and suppleness of his gestures, and his emotional fervor that he differed

from accepted standards. Two of the charges preferred against him by hostile critics, that he was melodramatic, not tragic, and that he could not read blank verse, had some foundation in fact. But "romantic" would have been a juster word than "melodramatic," which implies exaggeration without imagination. Fechter had imagination enough to comprehend the essential elements of Hamlet, though he may not have been able to plumb all his depths. His rich, illuminative action — the result of his Continental training—proved that; but such histrionic embroideries—even when explanatory and appropriate—seemed irreverent to disciples of the severest classic school.

His foreign intonation in Shakespearean verse was an indisputable and unfortunate blemish, but his mastery of the English language itself was perfect and his enunciation of it, even in the most rapid passages, admirably clear and correct. In elegance of carriage and dignified courtesy he was inferior to none. His mockery of Polonius, though sufficiently pointed, was not offensive, as it is on the lips of many actors, and in his rebuke of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, in which he showed fine indignation and irony, he did not permit his anger to detract from his personal dignity. In his passionate upbraiding of

his mother in the closet scene—in which he always stirred his audience to enthusiasm—he was not oblivious of the relationship existing between them. The restraint of filial tenderness and compunction was denoted even in his bitterest reproaches. With the grave-diggers his melancholy and tolerant amusement was in exactly the right vein. His remarkable skill with the foils gave special interest to his duel with Laertes, and the fury and rapidity with which he dispatched the King were thrillingly dramatic. His death was princely, picturesque, and pathetic. In soliloquy he saw the pictorial and emotional rather than the intellectual side, and in such passages Booth unquestionably surpassed him; but his impersonation as a whole, in its proportion and consistency and its peculiar power of personal fascination, was unique.

In romance and melodrama—in such pieces as "The Duke's Motto," "Monte Cristo," and "No Thoroughfare"—Fechter in his prime was *facile princeps*. It was as Armand Duval in "La Dame aux Camélias" that he made his first great hit in Paris, by the ardor of his love-making and his electrical outburst in the ball scene. He repeated these effects, much later in life, in New York, when he was elderly, fat, and painfully unfitted for the part of a juvenile lover. At the London

Lyceum, in the sixties, he was a model of grace, slim, lithe, and agile as a leopard. In action he was a picture. No one thought of the absurdities in "The Duke's Motto" when he was the Lagadère. His sincerity and fire, the dash and sureness of his execution, the fervor of his wooing, his infinity of melodramatic resource, and his perfect control of every situation, carried absolute illusion with them. His first entrance as Lagadére, when he hurled himself into a group of ruffians, scattering them like a bomb-shell, and then, in a flash, stood with naked rapier in the center of the stage, with his military cloak on his left arm, ready for attack from any quarter, proclaimed him a hero of romance, equal to any hazard and preordained to triumph. And in all the crises of his subsequent adventures he bore himself with the same masterful authority, the same infallible precision of executive detail.

He was no less fascinating as the pretended hunchback than he was as the gallant, ardent, fearless, and self-sacrificing Captain, and the swiftness and effectiveness of his transformations proved the extent of his technical skill and his histrionic adaptability. It is a mere truism to say that he held his audiences spellbound. Of course "The Duke's Motto," regarded as literature or drama, was poor stuff. It had not even

the value of a well-written fairy tale. But it was wholesome in sentiment and, like other kindred pieces, was capable of a sort of fictitious glorification by imaginative, ecstatic, and realistic acting. Herein is no contradiction in terms. Our modern advocates of the "realistic" drama, the drama that reflects actuality and nothing else, denounce the romantic drama (which, by the way, includes "Othello," "Macbeth," "Hamlet," "Lear," and "Faust") as trivial, false, puerile, and unworthy of our advanced stage of cultivation. If this is true of some romantic it is true also of much of the realistic drama, including some of Ibsen.

There is romance and romance, realism and realism, and, for myself, I believe that I can appreciate the best of either of them as well as anybody. But the point upon which I now wish to insist is that, in stage representation, realism and romance are closely akin. Romanticism upon the stage must be made to assume the present appearance of realism, to bear the aspect of probability and truth, before it can have any general public appeal or command critical approval. Beyond question the great bulk of modern, unliterary, romantic drama is unadulterated bosh. But even second-rate romantic melodrama of the type of "The Duke's Motto" may be dignified and

CHARLES FECHTER

as "Edgar of Ravenswood" as "Robert Macaire" as "Hamlet"

acquire a large measure of artistic and dramatic value in representation by properly qualified actors. Romance is exaggeration, and to convey illusion in the theater it must be acted—paradoxical as it may appear—in an artificial and exaggerated style to disguise the contrast between its happenings and those of every-day human experience. The actors, in other words, must comport themselves in accordance with the spirit of the fanciful prescribed circumstances.

And this they can not do without special training and a certain amount of special capacity. Our contemporary actors certainly have not the one, even if they have the other, and that is why romance can not now be made to succeed. Conditions seem to be changing, and perhaps we are on the road to its successful revival. Fechter had the special capacity, or genius, which enabled him, as it were, to establish the incredible by circumstantial evidence, and he had a group of players—Jordan, Widdicomb, Sam Emery, Kate Terry, and others scarcely inferior—who gave him the ablest support. He made "The Duke's Motto" and other plays of the same caliber, such as "Bel Demonio," famous during his dazzling career, but no other player has been able to duplicate his success in them, though many have tried. His great achievement was his illustration of

the art of romantic acting and its power to invest even inferior work with noble and inspiring attributes.

It is not necessary to dwell at length upon his various romantic characters, upon his Armand, Claude Melnotte, Count of Monte Cristo, Edgar of Ravenswood (in "The Bride of Lammermoor"), Louis and Fabien di Franchi (in "The Corsican Brothers"), Belphegor ("The Mountebank"), Macaire, and the rest. He succeeded in all of them because he vitalized them with this romantic glamor, which was the direct result of his personality, his temperament, and his efflorescent artistic style. His "business" in old parts was seldom new, but it was executed with a superior finish and a more conclusive air. Sometimes, indeed, he introduced some startling stroke, as in "Macaire." When shot, as he reached the top of the stairway by which he was trying to escape, he fell headlong backward down the whole flight, a feat which only a most accomplished athlete could venture upon without endangering his neck. But his performance of the Swiss, Jules Obenreizer, in "No Thoroughfare," was in a somewhat different category. This was a veritable creation, in which cunning, cruelty, and treachery, lurking beneath a suave and ingratiating exterior, were indicated with consum-

mate art. The evil, romantic glamor with which this super-scoundrel was invested raised this embodiment far above the level of the ordinary but effective melodramatic stuff by which it was surrounded. The tigerish stealth and ferocity exhibited in his attempted assassination of the sleeping Vendale was terrifying. He played this part afterward in New York, where he extinguished the memory of that admirable actor, W. J. Florence, in the same part simply because he added the emphasis of romantic spirit and action to realistic detail.

His Othello was a bit of picturesque, passionate, over-sentimentalized melodrama, neither grand nor tragic, but his Iago was an excellent piece of work. For his Shakespearean campaign at the Lyceum he offered Phelps an engagement, asking him whether he would play the Ghost in "Hamlet." "Who is to play the Prince?" said the gruff old hero of The Wells. "Myself," was the reply. "Well, damn your impudence!" roared Phelps, and the negotiations ended then and there. All the old-school actors and critics deemed impudence an integral part of Fechter's artistic composition. The man had his weaknesses, and paid the bitter penalty of them in full, but he was a genius.

VI

THE STAGE IN NEW YORK IN 1870

In retrospect many figures of sterling players present themselves to the mind's eye. The stage was the poorer when Kate Terry—elder sister of the more illustrious Ellen—who shared in several of Fechter's early triumphs, married and retired into private life. She was less gifted with radiant charm and personal witchery than her sister, but was a graceful and attractive maiden and an actress of sound training and marked natural ability. The heroines of Fechter's romances she played with infinite refinement, piquancy, and fervor, and no small emotional force. Success attended her in Juliet and Ophelia, but as the fair Capulet she was eclipsed by Stella Colas and Neilson. She left the stage when she seemed to be assured of a brilliant future. Not long ago, after the lapse of many years, she reappeared before the footlights. A widow, she hoped to lend distinction to the *début* of her daughter, Kate Terry Lewis, and, perhaps, to take up the broken thread of her own

career. But her experiment was a failure. The source of her former inspiration, long untended, had run dry.

Stella Colas was a comet who blazed for a season in the theatrical firmament and then vanished. She married well and still lives (1916), rich and honored, in Europe. Her Juliet set all the critics by the ears and crowded the theater to the roof. Some of them discovered in her the perfect paragon, a histrionic nonpareil; others proclaimed her a clever novice whose tragic fits consisted chiefly of inarticulate rant. That her English was broken and occasionally indistinct —that here and there, but very rarely, a phrase was unintelligible to persons not conversant with the text—can not be denied. But these blemishes, to my mind, were inconsiderable in comparison with the fascinating charm, the dominating intelligence, and the emotional power of the whole impersonation. Physically, in her slim, bright, animated, innocent, girlish beauty, she was an ideal Juliet. In the balcony scene she was a vision of delight. She distilled all the fragrant essences of that marvelous conception and blended them all into one exquisite manifestation of innocent rapture. In the bedroom scene she rose to a pitch of frenzied, anticipatory horror which was thrilling. Her whole being was

wrenched and racked in a paroxysm of mingled terror and desperation.

Old John Ryder was a typical specimen of the "legitimate" actor. There was no flash of inspiration in him, but he could act anything and act it well, while in all matters of stage practice and tradition he was an unimpeachable authority. He was a large, heavy, dignified man, who had been reared in the Kemble and Macready school and, perhaps unconsciously, imitated the manner of the great John Philip. His declamation was fastidiously correct and charged with sonorous music. So far as I can remember, I only saw him act once, though I often encountered him off the stage—and that was in the old melodrama "The Miller and His Men," in which he was tremendous. Then there was Hermann Vezin, the American actor, who passed the greater part of his long life in England and was regarded as one of the ablest actors and most accomplished artists in the profession. No question was ever raised about his all-around ability, but he bore the unfortunate reputation of being an unlucky man. There were whispers in theatrical haunts that he had "the evil eye." The superstitions of the stage folk constitute a pregnant comment upon their general intelligence. It is certain that, through no fault or delinquency of his own, he was

associated with a great number of theatrical disasters and forlorn hopes. But he was in great request as a stage manager and teacher and was a recognized scholar. In comparatively recent days, when Irving fell sick it was Hermann Vezin who was called upon in the emergency to fill his place as Macbeth, and he did it so effectually that many persons thought the performance improved by his participation. I remember a notable performance by him, with Bandmann, in "The Rightful Heir" of Bulwer-Lytton, a piece long since forgotten. Henry Compton made a hit in a burlesque of it called "The Frightful Hair."

Vezin married Mrs. Charles Young, an actress of wide range, who assuredly would have been accepted as a star of the first magnitude to-day. She won her place, not by beauty or by advertisement, but by sheer ability. I saw her as the Lady in "Comus," Lady Teazle, and Cordelia, among other parts, and she was admirable in all. Mr. and Mrs. John Billington were pillars of Ben Webster's company at the Adelphi for years and bore prominent parts in a wide variety of plays. Mrs. Billington survives in London (at the present writing), a respected nonagenarian. She was a contemporary of the Keeleys. Neither Fred Robson nor Walter Montgomery belonged to the older school of actors, but they must not be en-

tirely overlooked. Robson undoubtedly had some special gifts, but I very much doubt his possession of real genius. I saw him in "The Porter's Knot" and in the burlesque of "Medea." I realized the potent, homely pathos of the first and the genuine humor and startling mock passion of the other, but it did not seem to me that he was unique in either characterization. I was young then and my opinion may not be worth much, but the fact that he did not impress me very deeply in those impressionable days has its significance. I should rank him with Harry Beckett or Dominick Murray—or perhaps just a little higher—both of whom were capable of very striking outbursts of cowardly or venomous passion. Such demonstrations do not necessarily indicate genius, especially when there is a model to copy from. Cissy Loftus gives a capital imitation of one of Sarah Bernhardt's torrential outbursts in "Phèdre."

Walter Montgomery, the young American actor who committed suicide in such tragic circumstances when his star was rising very brightly upon the theatrical horizon, must not be altogether forgotten. There is every reason to believe that he was on the high road to fame and fortune. Nature had bestowed upon him a striking and virile personality, high ambition, energy,

and keen dramatic intelligence. His one handicap was a somewhat throaty and unmusical enunciation. But his voice was strong, his carriage gallant, and his gesture bold and free. He had fire, sentiment, and pathos. His Claude Melnotte, less pictorial, sentimental, and romantic than Fechter's, was admirable both in its boyish ardor and its despairing passion. In Hotspur he was the embodiment of choleric impatience and fierce martial spirit, held partly in check by rough geniality. He was "impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer," impetuous, irritable, stubborn, and prickly. It was a brilliant performance. He was equally effective in the easier character of Falconbridge and played King John with intelligent comprehension, although in subtlety and finish, of course, his impersonation was far inferior to that of Phelps. But it was better than Mantell's and he was only a beginner. With him let me close these English reminiscences. I was in New York when he killed himself, the victim of a terrible disillusionment.

It was in the middle of November, 1869, that I first landed in New York, and accident ordained that on the evening of the same day I should go to the theater. The house was Niblo's Garden, long since vanished, where Lotta Crabtree was acting Little Nell and the Marchioness in one of

the vilest of the many vile misrepresentations of Dickens. Like Lydia Thompson, the heroine of my earliest English dramatic experience, she was a typical product of her period. Here, as in the mother country, the old order of the stage was quickly passing away; the higher drama, both tragic and comic, was falling into deeper disrepute for lack of adequate interpreters, and the boards were more and more fully occupied by modern domestic or "social" farce or melodrama of no literary or dramatic consequence, even when entertaining; by pieces purely spectacular or sensational, by adaptations from the French, by burlesque—which, however, had not then sunk to its present depths of degradation—and by all kinds of freakish and acrobatic frivolity. Negro minstrelsy was still in its heyday, offering real melody and a humor that was often genuine if always grotesque. It had not yet been revolutionized and ruined by the "mastodonic" notions of Jack Haverly.

Burton, Blake, Murdoch, J. K. Hackett, J. B. Booth, G. V. Brooke, J. W. Wallack, and other players of the first rank were dead or in retirement. Edwin Forrest, diseased and enfeebled, though still potent in "Lear" and "Richelieu," was nearing his end. Charlotte Cushman was meditating her final farewell, Edwin Booth had

not reissued from temporary eclipse. A few stock companies still existed, notably those at Wallack's in New York, Mrs. John Drew's Chestnut Street Theater in Philadelphia, and the Boston Museum. But these were in process of decay, unable to make head against the trend of the times and the changing principles of management.

The days of trusts and syndicates were yet to come, but these beneficent institutions, professedly organized, like all other monopolies of the sort, for the benefit of the public, were but natural developments of the star and circuit systems already pretty well established. The "star" system, enabling speculative managers to dispense with expensive companies and to offer to the public the alternative of paying for representations by one fairly capable actor "supported" by a parcel of supernumeraries, or going without the theater altogether, was the beginning of all the mischief. When a group of speculators once conceived the idea of securing all the theaters and thus becoming virtual dictators of all theatrical policies—to the extinction of competition—the mischief was completed. One by one the stock companies—the only real schools of acting—were extirpated, until to-day (1900) there is scarcely one worthy of the name in existence in

this country. Fortunately there is reason for believing that this condition may not be permanent.

So long as the supply of well-equipped actors, trained after the ancient method, lasted it was possible to find leading performers who without any very gross flattery might be described as stars when compared with their associates. But this source was exhausted long ago. At any rate they were actors of the first class, if not always at the head of it. None of them has had a successor. There is not on the American stage today one solitary performer, male or female, of native origin, who is capable of first-class work in either the tragic or comic department of the literary imaginative drama. In modern drama we have some excellent performers, but even in this no great one. Why is this? It is because the wells of histrionic talent have been choked. As I have said before, there are indications that they may before long be reopened. Already there is a group of rising young English actors of both sexes likely to do big things in big drama in the near future. Where do they come from? Almost without exception from the stock company of F. R. Benson.

But to get back to Lotta and reminiscence. Of no artistic importance in herself, a theatrical will-o'-the-wisp, she was yet a striking illustra-

tion—as were Maggie Mitchell, Minnie Palmer, and others of their type—of the slender professional capital with which popularity and fortune may be won before the footlights in a degenerate age. She was an attractive little creature with a pretty, saucy face, a fairy figure, and wonderful agility. It was in the far West—in a mining camp, I believe—that she first charmed rough audiences by her dancing, banjo-playing, and singing. She attracted the attention of some theatrical agent on the lookout for a novelty, was diligently and successfully paragraphed, brought East, and introduced as a prodigy of humor and pathos. She was a bright and piquant morsel, prankish, audacious, with a pleasant aroma of girlish innocence about her, and she "caught on." For years the public adored her. She appeared in many parts and played them all in exactly the same way. She never developed or suggested any real dramatic force or adaptability. Her Marchioness was an amusing figure in its dirt and rags and childish make-believe, but was informed by no vestige of the Dickens spirit, while the so-called pathos of her Little Nell was the emptiest and dreariest of affectation. But she had splendid press notices, as if she were a luminary of purest ray serene. Modern press criticism has a good deal to answer for.

I have had a share in it for forty years and do not wish to shirk my own responsibilities. As I look over my old notes I realize that I have written some fearful rubbish. I hope now that I have learned to temper the heat of juvenile enthusiasm in the cold bath of experience.

VII

WALLACK'S IN THE DAYS OF JOHN GILBERT

Between 1870 and 1874 my theatrical opportunities were but few. I had a glimpse of Forrest —on the platform, not on the stage. I saw Salvini (to whom I shall return presently) in several of his greatest parts when he first visited this country with the Italian company which included Piamonti; I heard Wambold, the sweet tenor of the old San Francisco Minstrels, sing; I marveled at the scenic glories and the unutterable stupidity of "The Black Crook" (it is said that no word of the original dialogue was retained and that the author, Barras, reaped a fortune out of his copyright in the title only); I attended a variety of burlesques, including "Kenilworth," with Lydia Thompson as Leicester (I think) and Harry Beckett as an extraordinarily comic Elizabeth (I know), and I saw some modern plays and melodramas, mostly of indifferent quality—on the whole, a poor ha'porth of bread to an intolerable quantity of sack. But in the latter year I first undertook the task of a dramatic writer, and from that time up to the present I have seen

pretty nearly everything in the New York theatrical world worth seeing and much that was not. Moreover, my records are tolerably complete. It is my purpose, in these papers, to cull from them such matter as I hope may prove interesting and fresh to the present generation, dealing with the period between 1874 and 1885—remembered only by the elders—and dwelling only upon salient features, personages, and incidents.

This was the period of the gradual decline of Wallack's, which for many years had been generally recognized as the leading comedy theater in the country. In 1874 its prestige stood as high as ever and the company, even after the loss of such players as J. W. Wallack, Madeleine Henriques, Mrs. John Hoey, Mary Gannon, Charles Fisher, and other notabilities, was not perceptibly weakened. It included among others Lester Wallack, John Gilbert, W. R. Floyd, Madame Ponisi, H. J. Montague, Ada Dyas, Ione Burke, J. W. Carroll, J. B. Polk, Harry Beckett, Edward Arnott, Effie Germon, Mrs. Sefton, and E. M. Holland, a list which, in its assurance of general efficiency in both old and modern comedy, it would indeed be difficult if not impossible to parallel to-day. Old playgoers of that time used to complain that in its representations of standard comedy the theater had deteriorated in

style and spirit, and this may have been true—probably was, as the younger members of the company never had the advantages of the stock training enjoyed by the veterans; but the experience of the latter, with the traditions and discipline of the house, combined to remedy or conceal such deficiencies.

In any case it is certain that no such adequate interpretations of artificial comedy have been given in this neighborhood since the Wallack organization was dissolved. To all the requirements of the modern drama it was fully equal, and it had during the ten years under consideration much modern work to do. As a matter of actual count, three-fifths of the performances given were modern stuff, and more than one-fifth exceedingly unworthy modern stuff. Flaunting, brazen melodrama, pieces like "Youth," "The World," and "Spellbound," and hilarious improprieties such as "Forbidden Fruit," found their way to the honored stage of Wallack's only too often in later days. In common justice it should be added that they were, as a rule, admirably acted. Many of the modern plays, of course, were of a superior order. Two of them brought prosperity to the theater in 1874-5. These were "The Romance of a Poor Young Man"—in which H. J. Montague made his first decided hit in New

York, and J. W. Carroll furnished a very striking impersonation of the old privateersman—and "The Shaughraun," one of the best of Dion Boucicault's Irish dramas and completely characteristic of his methods. This latter piece proved one of the biggest financial successes recorded in theatrical annals. It packed the house for many months. Some of its popularity, especially in the galleries, was due doubtless to its artful appeal to the Irish patriotic spirit, which is "ag'in' the government." Fenianism then was more rampant in New York than in Ireland itself.

The play was theatrical patchwork, but the arrangement and joinery were neat and skilful and some of the stage effects ingenious and striking. Several of the personages, if unoriginal, were thoroughly human and alive. John Gilbert played a parish priest with a rare blend of genial benevolence, authority, tenderness, and pathos. Ada Dyas, a most capable actress, as the patriotic heroine in love with the British officer who was hunting her Fenian brother, furnished an exceedingly clever sketch of wayward, passionate, and perplexed girlhood. Harry Beckett, one of the many capable actors produced in the school of burlesque, made a sensation with his exhibition of frenzied cowardice in the part of the wretched traitor, Harvey Duff, while H. J. Mon-

tague, Edward Arnott, and J. B. Polk did excellent work in other prominent characters. For himself Dion had devised, not created, a character in Conn, the Shaughraun, which fitted him like a glove. A humorous, reckless, loyal, and mischievous scapegrace, he brought life and laughter, with now and then a dash of pathos, into every scene. He had prepared a variation of Lady Gay Spanker's fox-hunting speech which he delivered with sparkling vivacity. The great flaw in the play was a "wake" scene, which was devoid of truth and good taste, though full of the primitive bumpkin jokes which may be depended upon to set the galleries in a roar.

That was Dion Boucicault all over. He had artistic instincts and ambitions, but a vision of "good business" could blind him to all sense of fitness and proportion. He was not often, however, guilty of such a blunder in theatrical tactics as when he persuaded Lester Wallack to produce his "Rafael," an adaptation which he had made of that sultry French piece, "Les Filles de Marbre," with Ada Dyas as the enchanting, frigid, and pitiless Marco and the fragile H. J. Montague, of all men in the world, as the victim of devastating passion. It would have been difficult to find two actors more utterly unfitted by nature for the parts assigned to them. The ex-

periment, of course, was a disastrous failure. Few phenomena are more puzzling to the ordinary lay observer than the constant inability of experienced actors and managers to realize, even at rehearsal, the radical defects in a new play or the manifest incompatibility between it and the capacity of the selected players.

This experiment had one agreeable consequence. It induced Mr. Wallack to fall back upon legitimate comedy, of which, in New York, he had a virtual monopoly. He began with a revival of Holcroft's "The Road to Ruin," surrendering his own part of Young Dornton, in which he was in his younger days particularly successful, to H. J. Montague, for whom he entertained a warm personal affection. This, as it proved, was an unfortunate decision, for Montague, an attractive and very clever actor in light comedy of the Robertsonian order, was out of his element in parts requiring a more distinguished and virile style and robuster emotion. He was one of the weak spots in an otherwise capable and spirited representation. There seems to be no present likelihood of this sterling old piece revisiting the glimpses of the moon, more's the pity. It is old-fashioned in manner, of course, but it is full of vigorous characterization, amusing and moving incident, and of humor that is true and honest

DION BOUCICAULT
in "The Shaughraun"

JOHN GILBERT
as "Sir Peter Teazle," in
"The School for Scandal"

MADAME PONISI
in "The Shaughraun"

if in places a trifle broad, while it enforces a wholesome moral without too much sermonizing. In illustrating the influences of heredity and environment it is modern and scientific. But modern actors inevitably would make a sad hash of it. The Wallack company knew how to give it snap and go. John Gilbert, the most famous of "old men" for almost two generations, was a tower of strength in it. His Old Dornton was among his most notable creations—comparable with his Sir Harcourt Courtly, his Sir Peter Teazle, and his Sir Anthony Absolute—an ideal portrait of a substantial old English merchant, dignified, urbane, and genial, weak only in his doting affection for his prodigal son. The finished art with which he portrayed the internal struggle between his natural indignation at his son's follies and his paternal devotion was a triumph of emotional analysis. In the scene when, in a melting mood after a passionate outbreak, he refuses to say "good-night" to the wayward youth, the pathos of his outraged but pitying love was irresistible. He was perfect in an embodiment of this kind, not because it was suited to his personality or because he had made a specialty of "old men" (though he was forced to do so by his unrivaled excellence in such characterizations), but because in his youth he had

been drilled thoroughly in every department of the drama, including high tragedy, had mastered every nuance of the spoken word and every mystery of stage technique. In other words, he was a finished actor.

Madame Ponisi, another graduate of the stock-company system, was an invaluable member of the Wallack company. In stage knowledge she was almost the equal of Gilbert himself, though far behind him in special ability. If seldom brilliant, she was always thoroughly intelligent and competent. In her time she had played many of the principal tragic and comic characters of Shakespeare. She was a sound and impressive Lady Macbeth, was admirable in the old women of artificial comedy, as the aristocratic dames of modern social drama, in domestic plays, farce or melodrama. In "The Road to Ruin" she enacted the Widow Warren in exactly the right vein of full-blooded humor. And Harry Beckett's Goldfinch, though it had more rollicking fun than artistic cunning in it, was a most effective performance. Burlesque may be a most efficient school for the development of comic invention and significant pantomime in a young actor gifted with comic intuition. The contrast between Silky and Sulky was capitally emphasized by E. M. Holland and J. W. Carroll, the former player even in those

days showing much of the careful finish that was to distinguish his later work. The general representation was clothed with an appropriate atmosphere and spirit, the only inharmonious detail in the scheme being the anemic Young Dornton of Montague.

"The Road to Ruin" was followed after a short interval by "The Rivals." I propose as a matter of convenience to speak of these old comedy revivals in their order, without regard to intervening pieces, of which the principal will be referred to later on. In "The Rivals," of course, Mr. Gilbert was supreme. His Sir Anthony has never been equalled anywhere in the last half century, or approached except by Chippendale, William Warren, and Samuel Phelps. It is not necessary to expatiate upon it now, since it has been the subject of innumerable eulogies and is still within the memory of all but the younger playgoers. To the eye it presented a perfect realization of unreasoning absolutism. An imperious, quick, and fiery temper was revealed in the aggressive glances of the eyes, the stubborn set of the features, the heavy, determined step, the ready menace in the swing of the heavy cane, in every note of the resolute, clear-cut voice. The apoplectic fury of its sudden cholers would have been terrifying if it had

not been for the humorous effect of them, and volcanic as these explosions were, they were yet governed by the nicest sense of proportion and emphasis.

His executive skill was so sure that there was no suggestion of the artistic calculation by which it was directed. Many comedians—William H. Crane, for instance—have the gift of choler, but one of their outbursts is just like another. Gilbert's were diversified by all manner of subtle gradations. In every detail his Sir Anthony was alive—a marvel of vital consistency. W. R. Floyd, another of the trained veterans, was scarcely second to John Brougham himself in the part of Sir Lucius. His impersonation was not quite so mellow, perhaps, as that of the famous Irishman, but it was a delightful sketch, brisk, gay, gallant, and altogether Hibernian. Madame Ponisi was as good a Mrs. Malaprop as any one could reasonably wish to see, though Mrs. John Drew brought to the part a more elaborate affectation and more incisive speech. Edward Arnott conferred upon Jack Absolute the virility which Montague lacked, while Ada Dyas found in Lydia Languish a character well suited to her style and temperament.

It was in 1876 that Lester Wallack, after a lapse of six years, revived Mrs. Centlivre's com-

edy, "The Wonder," reappearing himself in the character of Don Felix, a character in which he had always appeared to advantage. He was essentially a romantic actor as well as an accomplished comedian, and the romantic coloring with which he decorated much of his work imparted a special charm to his Benedick and kindred parts. I should hesitate to place him among the "great" actors, for his range was not wide and he had no eloquence in the profounder emotions, but what he did do, in his own proper sphere of romance and comedy, he did preeminently well. Nature had been very bounteous to him. With his raven locks and flashing dark eyes, his fine figure and superb carriage, he was one of the handsomest men of his time, and naturally he was adored by the fair sex.

There was no suspicion of effeminate dandyism about him. His temperament was indisputably virile and all his embodiments had a most attractive manliness. He could be a fervent and fascinating but not a passionate lover. He could never have given a good performance of Romeo, Armand Duval, or Claude Melnotte; nor could he express profound pathos, although he could upon occasion be sympathetic and affecting, but as the man of cool resource and prompt action, in all the lighter moods of gayety and cynical levity,

and in the attributes of the man of the world, he was brilliantly efficient, acting with authoritative ease, grace, and spontaneity. In this revival his Don Felix, if slightly more mature than in earlier years, had lost none of its animation or serio-comic force. He revelled in the drunken scene with Don Pedro and was equally dexterous and amusing in the quarrel scenes with Violante. Whenever he was upon the stage he carried the action along to the grateful accompaniment of appreciative laughter. But the representation was not as successful as some of its predecessors. John Gilbert's study of the foolish, senile Don Pedro was a gem. Harry Beckett was very funny as the servant Lissardo, and W. R. Floyd as Col. Britton made a hit with the recital of his love adventures; but Ada Dyas was a cold and uninteresting Violante, and other parts were ineffective in the hands of new and inexperienced actors. But it was significant that the old-time actors "played up" in spite of the handicap to which they were subjected.

The "Wild Oats" of O'Keefe (revived in 1877) presents fewer difficulties than "The Wonder" and was presented with a happier cast. It is a less artificial piece, rough in construction, not too probable, but full of incident, bold characterization, and sturdy humor. O'Keefe painted with

broad sweeps of a full brush. The fact that his personages are types which long ago became conventional and are now obsolete is a good reason why they should be preserved upon the stage as a matter of record. They are amusing if not altogether credible. They seemed plausible enough as they were presented thirty-five years ago at Wallack's, but unluckily we no longer have any John Gilbert or Lester Wallack, not to speak of supporting casts. The part of Rover, the magnanimous, reckless vagabond, with the soul of a gentleman, the wits of an adventurer, and the purse of a pauper, was exactly suited to the artistic temperament of Lester Wallack. He delivered the innumerable quotations of the stroller with infinite gusto and travestied the mannerisms of famous actors, including some of his contemporaries, with much mimetic skill, incidentally making a fine display of his own ample histrionic resources. From first to last his acting was charged with mercurial spirit, but beneath all the audacious and sparkling levity he contrived to suggest a foundation of honor and manliness, more fully revealed in his brief periods of melancholy reflection. It was a notable piece of work, a striking instance of the power of artistic and imaginative acting to vitalize an artificial and illogical character. In taking

liberties with nature the old dramatists doubtless knew how far they could rely upon the capacities of their interpreters.

If O'Keefe had known John Gilbert, he could scarcely have conceived a character more to his liking than that of George Sir Thunder, a not much exaggerated type of the choleric, outspoken, hard-swearing post-captains of the Georgian era of the British navy. The old actor played it *con amore,* making the stage reverberate with sound and fury. His wrath, while it lasted, was portentous; his assault upon the players was terrific. Between the squalls there were spells of sunny, genial weather. At bottom Thunder was a humorous and kindly old fellow, and to the elemental justice and generosity in him Gilbert gave delightful expression. There were other excellent bits of acting in this revival, among which the John Dory of Edward Arnott, the Ephraim Smooth of Beckett, and the Jenny Gammon of Effie Germon live in the memory. To-day "Wild Oats" would be well-nigh impossible upon the stage, if only for the lack of a competent Rover. George Giddens could play Thunder.

VIII

MORE PLAYS AT WALLACK'S

The "Money" of Bulwer-Lytton, if not an old, is at least an artificial comedy, and the excellence of its performance at Wallack's (1878) gave it a dignity which entitles it to mention in this place. After all, notwithstanding its affectations, preachments, and conventionalities, it is a work of rare ability. The part of Alfred Evelyn, of course, was written specially for Macready—who was a bit of a prig himself—and it is not difficult to understand how Lytton, in trying to fit him, invested Evelyn with some of his traits and qualities. Lester Wallack's Evelyn, it is safe to say, did not in the least resemble Macready's. He was not, as has been remarked, a very versatile, though a highly accomplished, actor. He interpreted every part in terms of his own personality, and in his Evelyn there was more of the romantic than the intellectual. Whether a man of the type he presented would have adopted the course prescribed for him in the play may well be doubted. But his Evelyn was extremely interesting and attractive, vigorous, earnest,

graceful, and brightly intelligent. He was a seductive wooer and a charming companion, and bore himself with manly dignity in his supposed adversity. His sarcasm was fluent, but did not always carry a deadly point.

Picturesque in all externals, the impersonation lacked the distinction of intellectual power and purpose. But it was more human, perhaps, than the author's own ideal and was potent in the theater. John Gilbert, long an admirable representative of Stout, now played Sir John Vesey, whom he dignified with imposing carriage and manners, without slurring the baser elements in his nature. His anxiety in the gambling scene was comedy of the most finished kind. John Brougham played Stout with the most infectious humor. Beckett, from the artistic point of view, was a long, long way behind Charles Fisher (one of the old-school actors whose turn will come presently) in the character of Graves (of which Ben Webster was the original interpreter), but he was so excruciatingly funny in the scenes with Lady Franklin that he defied criticism. Madame Ponisi as Lady Franklin was inimitable. She was famous in it for years. Rose Coghlan, then in the full bloom of her youthful beauty, played Clara Douglas with rare charm and much wealth of womanly feeling, and H. J. Montague played

the small part of Dudley Smooth with most uncommon tact and emphasis. W. R. Floyd was a capital Blount and the minor parts were in perfectly competent hands. As for the mounting and dressing, they were always good at Wallack's, but it is only when the acting is poor that these decorative details command consideration.

In September, 1878, Mr. Wallack revived "The School for Scandal," and in so doing unfortunately lent the weight of his great authority to the pernicious practice of modernizing old plays, by following the example set by the Bancrofts at the London Haymarket. Condensation, of course, is excusable and often inevitable. Our ancestors were often prolix. But alterations, additions, and modifications of the scene plan are unjustifiable. An old play is an old play and ought to be given as nearly in its original shape as possible, for the sake of historical record, and as an illustration of the changes effected by time in construction and composition. In this particular instance it need not be pretended that much damage was done. The character of the play was not affected materially, and the interpretation, if not the best ever given in this house, was thoroughly worthy of it. But it may be noted incidentally, as an evidence that modernization does not necessarily mean elevation or expurgation, that the

few gross passages in the text were carefully retained. Mr. Wallack, whose Charles Surface was accounted among his most successful stage creations, abandoned that character to Charles Coghlan, who proved the best representative of it known to modern times. His triumph in it was immediate and complete. Less hilarious and boisterous than most of its predecessors, his impersonation was sufficiently gay and debonair, but its dominating expression was one of luxurious and improvident indolence and cynical amusement. The earlier scenes he played in a mood of partial intoxication. He was not in the least degree vulgarly drunk, but seemed enveloped in a vinous haze.

His rich costume was carelessly disarranged, his whole attitude was slothful, but observant, as if his excesses had begun to pall upon him and he needed some new fillip to give zest to the follies in which he was still eager to participate. His manners were perfect. Even in the frolic of the auction scene he carried himself with a natural and distinctive elegance. A manifest, wilful, and prodigal scapegrace, he contrived, by many subtle little artistic touches, to suggest his possession of latent merits to justify the praises of Rowley. In his interview with Sir Peter in Joseph's library he was particularly happy; his

quizzical, semi-serious rebuke of the guardian, who had turned inquisitor, his laughing but plainly truthful disavowal of the intrigues attributed to him, and his mischievous delight in the episode of the "little milliner" were in the best vein of high comedy, and in his mocking comments upon the revelation of the fallen screen, while gayly remorseless in his raillery of Lady Teazle and his brother, he exhibited a rare and delicate artistic perception in refraining from untimely mirth at the expense of the unhappy Sir Peter. Him he addressed in a tone of kindly humor not unmixed with compassion. This embodiment was, perhaps, Coghlan's most memorable achievement and must always rank high among the comic masterpieces of the theater.

It was worthy in every way of John Gilbert's Sir Peter, which, like his Sir Anthony Absolute, is still too fresh in the public memory to require prolonged notice here. It was less courtly than Chippendale's, less "peevish" and bitter than Phelps's, but more intensely human, perhaps, than either, while equally humorous. In this country, for many years, it was never approached, except by that of William Warren, and that not nearly. It was rich in testy, querulous humor, in dry sarcasm, in generous impulse, and, as a bit of portraiture, was finished with the

delicacy of a cameo. The Joseph of Charles Barron, an uninspired but intelligent and mechanically correct actor, much admired in Boston, was hard and melodramatic. Madame Ponisi as Mrs. Candor was a model of superficial frankness veiling malevolent suggestion. W. R. Floyd and E. M. Holland were respectively excellent as Backbite and Crabtree, Harry Beckett an amusing but extravagant Moses, and Rose Coghlan a most bewitching Lady Teazle, especially in the early scenes and in the quarrel with Sir Peter. As a whole the representation was admirable in the celerity of its action, in proportion, and in atmosphere.

A subsequent revival of "The Road to Ruin," inferior in some respects to the earlier one, was made notable by the Young Dornton of Charles Coghlan. This was a trifle wooden and laborious in the earlier scenes, as if the actor were feeling his way, but afterward exhibited all the virile energy and warm, emotional coloring which were so markedly absent from the impersonation of H. J. Montague. He created enthusiasm by the breathless impetuosity of his appeal to Silky, the fine burst of rage which followed its refusal, and the despairing levity of his scene with the Widow Warren, where he had every assistance from Madame Ponisi. A little later Mr. Wallack put

on "The Jealous Wife," a comedy of the younger Colman, which now appears to have fallen entirely into oblivion, to give Charles Coghlan an opportunity of acting Mr. Oakley. The experiment was only partly successful. On the English stage Oakley was represented as a middle-aged man. Phelps made of him a sort of companion picture to Sir Peter Teazle, acting in a spirit of broad comedy. Coghlan presented him as a young man and tried to modernize him, acting with studious naturalness and restraint until the last act, which he interpreted with the broadest emphasis. The consequence was that he not only robbed the play of its proper atmosphere and proportion, but also of most of its somewhat primitive humor. He made the climax effective enough when he came to it, but at the expense of the rest of the representation, which was indisputably dull, not altogether through Colman's fault. Phelps kept his audience laughing from first to last. Rose Coghlan was a fascinating and spirited Mrs. Oakley, but endowed that difficult lady with too shrewish a disposition and a dash of malice that is not appropriate to her. She really loved her husband, and her jealousy originated solely in genuine misconception.

In March, 1880, Lester Wallack, after many years' interval, reappeared in a part that had

been one of his youthful successes, Jack Wilding in Foote's old comedy, "The Liar." The piece is not very precious, but it provided him with some brilliant opportunities. Physically he was far too mature and heavy for the character of the gay and mendacious young student, but his art enabled him to maintain the illusion of youth by vigor and grace of movement and an incessant flow of animal spirits. He rattled through the first act with magnificent vivacity, uttering his fabrications with a glibness and apparent sincerity calculated to deceive even the elect. And his comic perplexity and distress in the second act, when his lies, like chickens, came home to roost, were delicious. For the moment he made the preposterous farce entirely plausible. But then he had John Gilbert, whose Old Wilding was another perfect example of peppery humor, to back him, and Ada Dyas, whose cold, polished, sparkling, but utterly passionless style was exactly adapted to the part of Miss Grantham. There need be no lamentation over the disappearance of "The Liar" from the stage, for it has no substantial literary or dramatic value, and there are no longer any actors capable of giving to any of these three characters the artificial brilliancy without which they would appear to modern eyes unlifelike and conventional.

The inferiority of the modern actor, untrained in the old schooling, was strikingly manifested in the production of "As You Like It" at Wallack's in October, 1880. The lovely comedy was presented in sumptuous fashion, but with a minimum of poetic illusion. A new leading man, Osmund Tearle—an English actor who died a year or two ago in England, where he enjoyed a fair Shakespearean reputation in the provinces—was the Jacques. He was, in 1880, by no means a bad performer of the modern school. He had intelligence, a good presence and voice, but neither dignity nor depth. His Jacques was Victorian, demonstrative, and shallow. In the "Seven Ages" speech he won the applause of the gallery by ingenious vocal variations and elaborate mimetic gesture, which might have passed muster in the "Queen Mab" speech of Mercutio, but were abominably inappropriate in the case of this philosophical and misanthropic dreamer among the deer in the woods of Arden. Another new English actor, John Pitt, a big, manly man, was an attractive Orlando to look at, and acted the part fluently, vigorously, and with mechanical accuracy, but without the least glamor of romantic spirit, while his reading was hard and monotonous. He was as much out of his proper element as a swan upon a turnpike road. William

Elton, the new low comedian of the company—who was to do much admirable work afterward—was one of the many clever graduates from burlesque, and interpreted Touchstone after the burlesque method. He provoked plenty of the laughter which is so dear to the box-office, but vulgarized the part hopelessly. Rose Coghlan's Rosalind—to become a notable impersonation in later years—had brilliancy and charm, glittered with archness and spirit in masquerade, but was deficient in poetic imagination and nobility and tenderness of feminine spirit. The only characters to satisfy fully the Shakespearean conception were the Adam of Mr. Gilbert—thoroughly emblematic of simple, natural dignity, stanch loyalty, and pathetic affection—and the Banished Duke of Harry Edwards, another well-trained actor—a competent embodiment in every way. The glory was already beginning to depart from Israel.

This melancholy fact received additional confirmation in the revival of "She Stoops to Conquer" in May, 1884, when the low comedy of Tony Lumpkin was converted into mere buffoonery by Frank Howson, and Louise Moodie proved completely inadequate to the part of Miss Hardcastle. But all shortcomings—and they were many and painful—were forgotten in the

enjoyment of the Charles Marlow of Lester Wallack, and the Hardcastles as played by John Gilbert and Madame Ponisi. Wallack could no longer look the part, but he played it inimitably, with the choicest mixture of cool, elegant effrontery and demoralized bashfulness. As for the Old Hardcastle of John Gilbert, it was one of those creations which, once seen, live for ever in the memory. I can see him now as he sat at the table, with his arm thrown protectingly around the flagon which he was determined to defend against the combined assaults of his two incomprehensible guests, his face a mirror of complex emotions, amusement, bewilderment, and a rising indignation checked by courtesy and hospitable impulse. Madame Ponisi was no less natural or artistic as the silly, motherly, quick-tempered, and credulous Mrs. Hardcastle. Truly these old players were artists who knew their business; and wide is the gulf between their sure and varied artistry and the accomplishment of modern mummers, whose one specialty is in the monotonous repetition of themselves.

These old comedy revivals were the brightest features in the history of Wallack's during the period 1874-1884. By them the prestige of the house was maintained, and it was in them that the best qualities of the company were revealed.

It is impossible now to refer particularly to the forty or fifty modern plays produced during the same time, nor would it be highly profitable. There were, of course, some notable as well as many inconsiderable representations. Of the former a few may be recalled. A notably fine production of "Caste" was given in 1875, when George Honey, once a famous operatic buffo, appeared as Eccles, filling him with a wonderful brand of liquorish humor. A more unlovely or more truthful study of a sodden British pot-house ranting radical could not easily be imagined, but it was extraordinarily funny and, with all its broad strokes, a finished bit of artistry. His grotesque rage at the refusal of his daughter to receive the alms of her titled mother-in-law was as fine a bit of eccentric low comedy as could be desired, and his harangue to the sleeping infant—when he stole the coral—was a gem. H. J. Montague as D'Alroy, Charles A. Stevenson as Hawtree, Ada Dyas as Esther, Effie Germon as Polly, E. M. Holland as Sam, and Mme. Ponisi as the Marchioness were all happily cast. To make fun of the Robertsonian comedy is easy. It is often trivial, conventional, and ultra-sentimental, and it is too full of predestined coincidence, but in most of its details and character sketches it is veracious and human.

as "Charles Marlow," in
"She Stoops to Conquer"

LESTER WALLACK
as "Benedick," in
"Much Ado About Nothing"

as "John Garth"

Lester Wallack was superb in Planché's comedietta "The Captain of the Watch." The manner was all. He carried the character of the gay, gallant, coxcombical hero with the most picturesque effrontery. It was worth going to the theater to see him bow himself off in the last act. He retired backward, almost across the whole width of the stage, making sweeping bows to every member of the cast in turn, with an appropriate salutation to each. The difficult maneuver was performed with a picturesque grace and elegant assurance which were indescribably effective.

He revealed another side of his art in "John Garth," the melodrama which John Brougham made out of the novel of that name. In this he showed his power in the portrayal of the graver emotions. Garth is a strong, generous man who, soured by misfortune and injustice, has become callous and misanthropical, but is restored to his better self by the promptings of paternal affection and the reawakening of his natural magnanimity. In this character Wallack exhibited morose gravity, virile tenderness, and passionate rage with striking effect; and he also displayed a mastery of the symbols of the graver emotions in the "All for Her" of Palgrave Simpson and Hermann Merivale, in which a ruined profligate,

ennobled by hopeless affection, sacrifices himself to secure the happiness of the loved one, after the fashion of Sydney Carton. It was an able and a moving portrayal, but was wanting in sincerity. His emotional display was a very clever and artistic counterfeit, but had no convincing ring. It was good plated ware, not sterling metal. There was no vein of real tragedy in him. He was first and last a comedian. But he could embody many of the sterner attributes of manhood, such as energy, promptitude, anger, courage, and resolution. A. C. Wheeler, one of the best known dramatic critics of his time, and Steele MacKaye wrote a piece for him called "The Twins," in which he enacted two brothers, one a dreaming, impractical student, who sat among his books while his wife imperilled fame and fortune; the other a keen, bustling, able man of the world, the *deus ex machina,* who comes to the rescue, straightens all tangles, and brings general happiness in his train. He played his own part to admiration, throwing the diverse characters into strong relief, and winning a personal success, but the play was a failure, partly because Ada Dyas, who did not like her part, that of the heroine, contented herself with walking through it, answering and giving "cues," but attempting nothing in the way of expression

or gesture. The wet blanket which she threw over the proceedings effectually quenched whatever dramatic fire her associates may have attempted to kindle.

In modern drama he was seen at his best in such parts as Henry Beauclercq, the shrewd, polished, and resourceful diplomat in "Diplomacy"—in which he, with Fred Robinson as Orloff, H. J. Montague as Julian, and Rose Coghlan as Zicka, constituted a remarkable quartet; as Hugh Chalcote in "Ours," and as Prosper Couramont in "A Scrap of Paper," in which his portrayal of a man of the world, cool, imperturbable, blandly authoritative, shrewd, indolent, and witty, stirred into sudden action by an emergency of his own creation involving the happiness of the woman he loved, must always be included among his most brilliant achievements. To quote but one incident. There is not an actor upon the stage to-day who could approach—let alone duplicate—him in the treatment of the scene where he is challenged to fight by a frantic young lover. His placid air of amused but intensely provocative unconcern, his half-humorous, half-compassionate "Poor little boy!" in reply to a furious tirade, his careless deliberation in the proposal of preposterous weapons, his whole air of authority and genial

magnanimity, were inimitable. Sardou himself could not have wished for an abler interpreter of one of the best scenes in one of his cleverest comedies. With this memory these notes on the old Wallack's may fittingly close.

IX

DALY'S STOCK COMPANY IN THE SEVENTIES

Of the two other prominent stock companies of this period, Augustin Daly's and A. M. Palmer's, precedence must be allowed to the former. Daly was a remarkable man in many ways, the creator and arbiter of his own fortunes. In the variety of his accomplishments, in his indefatigable industry, in his ambitions, his independence, his pluck, and his resourcefulness, he stood alone among contemporary managers. He was a student with good literary and artistic intuitions, wrote (or adapted) a great many of his plays, and was virtually his own stage manager. In his theater he was a despot. Everything that happened between the box-office and the stage door was subject to his personal supervision. There can be no doubt that he would have done much more really good work than he did if he had not attempted to do so much. As a stage director he was brilliant, adventurous, prodigal, and catholic, but his knowledge was not universal nor his judgment always sound. The

artistic success of some of the most costly and ambitious of his productions was not commensurate with the reputation of some of his players or the elaborateness of the decorations. There were apt to be very feeble brothers and sisters in the tail-end of his casts, and not infrequently his leading players were obvious misfits in the parts to which they were assigned. He ransacked the curiosity shops of Europe for antique pieces which contributed greatly to the splendor of his stage interiors, but some of the pictures on the walls might be unconscionable daubs.

Similarly, a landscape scene, admirable in many respects, might be ruined by splotches of impossible color or by the introduction of horrible imitation statuary. So it came to pass that comparatively few of the fifty or more representations which he made in 1874-84 were completely satisfactory, both scenically and dramatically, however brilliant they might be in spots. He never—except possibly in two or three of the light comedies which he adapted from the German—attained to the all-round high standard of performance set by Wallack's in its best days. In his earlier managerial period he was more than once on the verge of financial ruin, but he found a substantial backer in his father-in-law, John Duff, and thereafter he often floated on

flood tides of prosperity. His theaters—whether the Fifth Avenue or the renovated old shanty, Wood's Museum, the present Daly's, which he occupied in 1879—were never without potential attractions. He knew how to cater for the public. He provided for them an atmosphere of comfort and refinement, many popular actors, including some of sterling worth, diversified programmes, and, whenever opportunity offered, the most enticing displays of fashionable millinery well set off by pretty women.

At the head of Daly's histrionic forces in 1874 stood Charles Fisher, an actor of trained skill and vast experience. Long past his early prime, he was still in full possession of his physical and artistic resources. He was tall, handsome, dignified, with the precise, bold, free execution and courtly grace of the old school of comedy. He was capable of sparkling and spontaneous gayety —as leading man at Wallack's in earlier days he had been an admirable Charles Surface—of sly humor, vigor, robust passion, and many forms of pathos, but not of tragic emotion. In his acting he exhibited many of the artistic traits of Gilbert and Wallack, but with less distinction and power. George Clarke, even then a veteran among juveniles—he preserved his youthful figure to the last—was another versatile and well-

trained actor, expert in all the tricks of his trade, intelligent, but without a particle of inspiration. W. Davidge, a racy and eccentric personality, was a low comedian of wide range and infinite experience, brimful of a robust humor which could be dry, saturnine, unctuous, or Bacchic at will. Moreover, he had a considerable command of choler and pathos, but neither in visage nor figure was he adapted to the principal characters in high comedy. He could play Sir Oliver Surface, and Eccles, and Dick Deadeye (in "Pinafore"). In his degree he was a rare and invaluable performer. Frank Hardenberg was also a skilled and versatile player, especially strong in all lines of eccentric melodrama.

Mrs. G. H. Gilbert, an old actress then, lived to be loved and honored at a much later date. She began her theatrical career as a dancer, which doubtless explains the fine poise and elegance of movement for which she was distinguished to the very end. Her manners were notably fine, whether in the perfect simplicity of the best modern breeding or in the nicer illustration of the artificial methods of the older comedy. Her sense of humor, whether broad or refined, was keen and true, and found the fullest means of expression in her eloquent facial play and her fluent and appropriate gesture. In all the at-

tributes of simple womanhood she could be very tender and sympathetic, while as the formidable stage mother-in-law—a type of which our modern civilization ought to be ashamed—she was unsurpassed. For nearly half a century she was a public favorite. She has gone and left the world no copy.

At Daly's she found a frequent professional associate in James or "Jimmy" Lewis, a quaint, dry, chipper, and magnetic little comedian who contributed very largely to the merriment of his generation. He was a most useful player, for although his mannerisms were so many and aggressive that disguise with him was virtually impossible, they were of a kind that harmonized well with many widely contrasted characters, and he thus suggested a versatility which he did not actually possess. In almost any circumstances he was amusing, and even when most grotesque his impersonations had a finish and consistency which gave them artistic value. The leading lady of the company, Fanny Davenport, daughter of the famous E. L. Davenport, was only inheritor in part of her father's genius, but was a superb creature physically, in form and feature a thing of perfect beauty. In later years she won some popular renown in passionate romantic parts, but in these salad days her acting, though in-

stinctively intelligent and by no means devoid of feeling or forcefulness, clearly revealed her inexperience. Her personal charms formed no small proportion of her theatrical assets. Sara Jewett, also a novice, pleased by a singularly attractive, refined, delicate, and sentimental personality. Ada Dyas has been spoken of already. Ada Rehan was yet to come. Other members of the company may be left to future reference.

As in the case of Wallack's, I propose to take note first of Daly's achievements in the higher comedy. In 1874 he produced "The School for Scandal," following—he loved to be up to date—the Bancroft model. If, like Wallack, he did not do much harm by this departure from old standards, he approved a mischievous precedent, marked another step in a progressive decadence, and paved the way for more futile and pernicious innovations in the near future. He gained nothing but the opportunity for elaborate decorations—which have wrought more evil, perhaps, to the modern theater than anything else—of which he took the utmost advantage. The representation—distinctly inferior to that at Wallack's—was, nevertheless, excellent. Charles Fisher as Sir Peter was a good second to Gilbert. He failed to give prominence to the testiness and crabbedness of the character; he was a trifle too urbane.

But he had the old comedy style and finish, was capital in the quarrel and wholly admirable in the screen scene, exhibiting delightful senile glee in the episode of the "little milliner," showing dignified pathos in his confidences with Joseph and a masterly blend of indignation, humiliation, suffering, and self-control while listening to the raillery of Charles. These qualities can only be indicated; it is impossible now to expatiate upon them.

The novel and most striking feature of the representation was the Joseph of Louis James, which was exceedingly happy in its combination of a modern spirit with formal style. James Anderson—primarily a tragedian, and a far more artful expert in the technique of acting than Mr. James—was as careful (in the Drury Lane revival of which mention has been made) to emphasize the element of calculation in Joseph's hypocrisy as he was to embellish him with superficial plausibility and polish. James played the character more in the spirit of a roguish and time-serving egotist, who, finding it easy to veil his moral and actual delinquencies behind complacent hypocrisies, had contracted the habit of them without much thought of the consequences. He was not a deep, designing villain, but rather a weak and shallow rascal, with agreeable man-

ners, whose selfish policy of present expediency, very successful for a time, finally and inevitably was to lead to his complete discomfiture. It was an extremely able and plausible performance, with an air of frankness and unaffected honesty about it that supplied some warrant for Sir Peter's confidence. It has not since been excelled or equalled. The only other really good performances were those of Crabtree by Frank Hardenberg, a bit of genuine characterization, and the Mrs. Candor of Mrs. Gilbert, admirable both in manner and delivery. George Clarke simply romped through the part of Charles, while the Lady Teazle of Fanny Davenport, though a respectable first attempt, was remarkable only for its loveliness.

"The School for Scandal" was followed by a series of so-called old comedy revivals. The first was a chopped and altered version of Sheridan's "The Critic," which would only with difficulty have been recognized by its author. Fanny Davenport burlesqued Tilburina prettily enough, and Lewis was comical in what was left of Puff, as he was in everything, and may have satisfied theatergoers who had never had the good fortune to see Charles Mathews in the part, but the only player who caught the true spirit of the extravaganza was Davidge, whose Whiskerandos

CHARLES FISHER
as "Sir Peter Teazle," in
"The School for Scandal"

FANNY DAVENPORT

EDGAR L. DAVENPORT

was "exquisite fooling." It was Davidge again who was conspicuously competent — among younger performers who were often ill at ease in what were to them strange conditions—in the part of Old Hardy in a modified version of Hannah Cowley's "The Belle's Stratagem," his robust and colorful humor exciting much merriment. Fanny Davenport evidently had a good notion of the character of Letitia Hardy, but not the art to embody it. The earlier scenes she ruined by grotesque exaggeration, but she was a bewitching vision. Louis James was too heavy for Doricourt in the opening acts, but was more nearly satisfactory as the aroused and jealous lover at the close. Mrs. Gilbert was perfectly at home in the part of Mrs. Rackett, and Lewis, though intensely modern, was very funny as the irrepressibly inquisitive and loquacious Flutter. But the interpretation was a patchwork of old and new, inharmonious in design and unequal in execution. Only the costliness of the framework in which it was set made it seem a precious thing.

The "Masks and Faces" of Charles Reade is not yet one of the old comedies, but is written in a similar vein, and may, by courtesy, be reckoned among them. Daly, of course, revived it in order to exhibit Fanny Davenport in the showy part of Peg Woffington, which in bygone

days was coveted by every capable actress who owned a pretty face. In personal fascination Miss Davenport was the equal, doubtless, of Peg herself, and she represented her very charmingly, if in strictly contemporary fashion. The tone of the comedy and the manners of the period she disregarded. But her deficiencies in these respects were fully atoned for by the Triplet of Charles Fisher, which was no whit inferior to that of Benjamin Webster, the original creator of the character. The latter, indeed, depicted with exquisite fidelity the mental and bodily sufferings of the starving poet, but failed to suggest the buoyancy of spirit which enabled him to endure them. The occasional gleams of this sanguine temperament in Fisher's impersonation not only lightened the gloom of the character, but made it still more sympathetic. It was a wonderful bit of vital portraiture, which conferred artistic dignity upon the entire representation.

In January, 1875, Mr. Daly put on a badly mangled version of "The Merchant of Venice" in four tableaux, the rich dressing and picturesque setting making small amends for the irreverent and often incapable treatment of the text. The representation, although much lauded at the time, would scarcely be worthy of record here but for the appearance of E. L. Davenport as Shylock.

He was one of the ablest, best instructed, and most versatile actors of his time, bringing to his characterizations a noble presence, an intellectual and plastic countenance, a clear and trumpet-like enunciation, and glowing dramatic fire. He surpassed Edwin Booth in range, though inferior to him in subtlety and electrical tragic inspiration. His Jew was a forceful and consistent study, masterful, keen, with a note of menace in its sarcastic self-control. He was intense rather than tempestuous, and tore no passion to tatters. His first encounter with Antonio was marked by deep craft underlying suave cynicism. In the street scene—after the loss of his jewels and the flight of his daughter—the agonies of wounded avarice were portrayed with thrilling and realistic power. The references to his fugitive child suggested bitter revengeful rage rather than parental pathos. The concentrated, cool, and deadly purpose of his acting in the court scene was appalling, and his final collapse a tragic picture of blank and irremediable despair. The Portia of Carlotta Leclercq and the Bassanio of Louis James were both creditable efforts, but the histrionic quality of the general support was worse than indifferent.

Davenport was again the dominating figure in a revival of "As You Like It" at Daly's in 1876,

but in this case was not the only competent player. Of all the interpretations of Jacques I can recall his was the best in its philosophic pose and carriage, in reflective or caustic humor and oratorical skill. It is a pity that the phonograph did not then exist to keep a permanent record of his recitation of the "Seven Ages" soliloquy for the instruction and profit of future players. There was not in it the slightest suggestion of studied vocal trick or calculated gesture. He uttered the lines as if, lost in revery, he were unconsciously speaking aloud the description of the successive pictures as they formed themselves in his mind. There was no minute and labored mimicry—no attempted realization of the sighing lover, the sudden and quick soldier, the round-bellied justice, or the lean and slippered pantaloon—but only just enough of change in facial expression and vocal tone to denote the speaker's introspective appreciation of the ideals he was contemplating. Delicate as was the method, the dramatic effect was extraordinary. Mr. Davenport was equally successful, if in a very different way, in the bantering encounter with Orlando. His whole impersonation was a notable instance of executive skill directed by artistic instinct. The Touchstone of Davidge was another excellent performance, in the true

Shakespearean vein, full of rich and quaint humor and aptly illustrative resource. Lawrence Barrett was a virile and amatory, if not very romantic, Orlando, and D. H. Harkins an efficient Banished Duke, while the minor personages were inoffensive. Fanny Davenport was a lovely Rosalind to the eye, was spirited, arch, gallant, and coquettish, but the poetic side of the character eluded her. She was a modern young woman having "a good time" in medieval masquerade, and this was true also a year later when the comedy was revived to introduce Charles Coghlan as Orlando, which he played admirably.

X

ADELAIDE NEILSON AND THE UNION SQUARE STOCK COMPANY

Adelaide Neilson acted Juliet in a revival of "Romeo and Juliet" at Daly's in 1877, and, of course, drew the town. She had long been famous in the character, with which her fame is perhaps now most closely associated. She was ravishingly pretty and she had a measure of dramatic genius, but not of the high, inventive, intellectual type. Her natural intelligence was ample, her artistic equipage sufficient, but not remarkable; she could be arch, tender, pathetic, and fervently affectionate, and she could strike a thrilling note of emotional passion. All her gifts and accomplishments were exhibited in her Juliet, which was in full ripeness at Daly's, where she had the advantage of an ardent, virile, and passionate Romeo in Eben Plympton. Her balcony scene—less dainty, poetic, and ethereal than Modjeska's or Stella Colas's—was fascinating and lovely in its manifestation of youthful faith and ardor and rapturous happiness, mingled with maidenly timidity; and in the potion scene her physical vigor enabled her to give thrilling

expression to a paroxysm of hysterical horror, with very little suggestion—there was a trace—of rant. She will always hold a place, if not the first, among the great Juliets. And on this occasion she was, on the whole, well supported. Charles Fisher's Mercutio was gay and buoyant in spirit and brilliant in technique. Mrs. Gilbert was an excellent Nurse, Crisp a fiery Tybalt, and Hardenberg a capable Friar.

In a revival of "Twelfth Night" Miss Neilson as Viola was less satisfactory to a critical taste. The more delicate, imaginative, and romantic side of the character escaped her. She was too buxom, gay, and debonair, reflecting but rarely the tender melancholy of an apparently hopeless love and anxiety for the loss of a brother. But the spell of her physical beauty, her archness and vivacity, was always potent with her audience. Charles Fisher's Malvolio, a finely finished bit of eccentric comedy, only lacked a touch of quixotic pride and gravity to perfect it. The Toby Belch of Davidge was rich in liquorish humor, better than any ever seen here, perhaps, with the single exception of poor Wenman's. Plympton was a capital Sebastian, and the young John Drew a promising Sir Andrew.

This must be accounted among the most worthy of Mr. Daly's old comedy revivals, as it was for

some time the last. Misfortune overtook him, and during 1878 he was out of the New York field. When he returned to the city it was to open the renovated Broadway Theater (Wood's Museum) under the name of Daly's, with a company which was to become famous in the lighter forms of social drama, but was ill-adapted to the interpretation of artificial literary comedy or imaginative poetic plays. But this fact did not prevent Mr. Daly from making occasional incursions into old comedy in his own arbitrary fashion. In 1882 he selected Colly Cibber's "She Would and She Wouldn't"—no very precious thing, to be sure—cut and changed it remorselessly, partly in the interests of propriety, partly to bring it within the capacity of his company, but chiefly to give his new leading lady, Ada Rehan, then in her earliest bloom (but not the actress she afterward became), an opportunity of displaying her piquant charm, mercurial spirits, and sparkling humor. She frolicked through the part of the disguised Hippolyta with infinite vivacity and pretty audacity, making a fascinating cavalier. But as a bit of old comedy her performance was utterly insignificant. And of the supporting company only old Charles Fisher, as the obstinate, fussy, and gullible Don Manuel, seemed to be in his proper element.

ADELAIDE NEILSON
as "Viola" in
"Twelfth Night"

SARA JEWETT
as "Lady Teazle" in
"The School for Scandal"

ADELAIDE NEILSON
as "Juliet" in
"Romeo and Juliet"

A little later Mr. Daly offered his own adaptation of Garrick's expurgated edition of Wycherley's "The Country Wife," which, of course, was valueless as an example of dramatic construction, style, manners, or anything else. It was not even a reflection of the original work, which in some respects was fortunate. Ada Rehan did not in the least resemble the true Peggy Thrift, for whom she substituted, with amusing effect, her own attractive self. Once more Mr. Fisher, as Moody, was the one player in the cast who knew his business. Mr. Daly's company was no less unhappy in the extracts which he provided for them from "The Recruiting Sergeant" of Farquhar, which had not been essayed in this country for fifty years. The newspaper praise bestowed upon some of these misrepresentations was astounding.

The simple truth is that Augustin Daly's reputation as an enlightened supporter of the higher drama, an elevator of the stage, was largely fictitious. He had artistic instincts and ambitions, but not the knowledge, the persistence, or the material to bring his more serious endeavors to full fruition. But for contemporaneous plays of all kinds he had a much sounder intellectual and managerial equipment. It was in this department that he often achieved solid attainment

and prosperity. But it is not necessary to dwell long, or particularly, upon this phase of his career. The plays which filled his theater and his treasury—many of them clever, bright, amusing, or emotionally exciting and sometimes most effectively performed—were of a common type and purely ephemeral. Few were of any notable literary or dramatic merit or are now remembered even by name. Such pieces as "The Woman of the Day," "The Big Bonanza," "Our Boys," "Pique" (in which Fanny Davenport made a great personal hit), "Needles and Pins," "The Passing Regiment," "Dollars and Sense," and "Love on Crutches," all belonged to the same family. They were excellent entertainment, lightly illustrative of the follies of the day, were luxuriously dressed, and were admirably suited to the personal and histrionic qualities of the company. The selection of them from the commercial point of view was eminently sagacious, and the representations of them, in their way, completely satisfactory.

Neater or more exhilarating light comedy work than was furnished by Charles Fisher, Mrs. G. H. Gilbert, Ada Rehan, John Drew, James Lewis, Frank Hardenberg, Fanny Morant, George Parkes, Virginia Dreher, Charles Leclercq, and others, could not reasonably be asked. And much

of the acting, in its delicacy and point, was of high artistic quality. But the prevailing spirit in all was one of frivol. The promise of serious social satire in "Our First Families" and "Americans Abroad" was lamentably unfulfilled, legitimate dramatic themes being ruined by grotesque extravagance. Fanny Davenport, rashly adventuring (with Daly's consent) upon the preserves of Sarah Bernhardt, made a respectable failure as the tragic old grandmother in the pseudo-classic "Vesta," and Ada Rehan, challenging comparison with Clara Morris, was sadly ineffectual in the morbid emotionalism of "Odette." "The Moorcroft" of Bronson Howard, the "Through the Dark" of Steele MacKaye, "Serge Panine," the "Mankind" of Merritt and Conquest, were melodramas of varying degrees in the second rate. "The American," a Daly adaptation of Dumas's "L'Etrangère," was a piece of stronger dramatic caliber, and is memorable for the masterly performance in it by Charles Coghlan of the abominable Duke de Septmonts—a microscopic study of cold, smooth, steely villany—and the piquant and dangerous adventuress of Jeffreys Lewis. A notable success was won also by "The Squire," Pinero's dramatization from Hardy's "Far from the Madding Crowd," in which Ada Rehan played with

much charm and passion, although she did not in any way embody Hardy's heroine. Mr. Daly showed commendable enterprise also in his production of Pinero's "Lords and Commons," for which he prepared a very strong cast, but the play proved a disappointment, and most of the actors unfortunate misfits.

The Union Square Theater, under the management of Sheridan Shook and A. M. Palmer, played a very prominent part in New York theatrical history in 1874-84. Shook was the capitalist and Palmer the director. The latter was a man of considerable cultivation, suave, shrewd, worldly, somewhat hesitant and timid in judgment, but with first-rate executive ability and a remarkable faculty of finding means to serve his ends. He selected his actors with much discrimination, knowing what he wanted from them, but in the matter of the choice of plays and the preparation of them he trusted much in the acumen of his right-hand man and familiar, A. R. Cazauran, a Bohemian journalist and linguist of wide and curious learning, great practical ability, and cosmopolitan experience. Profoundly versed in theatrical literature and detail, he was invaluable not only as reader, translator, adapter, or supervising stage-manager, but as general agent, mentor, and guide. He was an ideal fac-

totum and, for a variety of reasons with which we need not now concern ourselves, he was perfectly willing to work in the background, so that comparatively few persons knew how much the theater, and Mr. Palmer, owed to his brains. He not only virtually selected many of the most remunerative plays, but put the final polish on them. So much is due to the memory of an old acquaintance who had his weaknesses and paid for them pretty dearly.

In his day the Union Square company was the best in the country, and probably in the world for its own particular purpose, but it was not an ideal stock organization, for the simple reason that its capacity was strictly limited to melodrama, either of the sensational or social emotional variety. It was not qualified to engage in the higher literary comedy, in imaginative romance or tragedy, and Mr. Palmer, wise in his generation, made no perilous excursions in those directions. He was content to do well what he set out to do, and by adhering steadily to this policy he reaped a rich reward. All his representations were distinguished by vigor and vitality, and that cooperative smoothness and proportion which can only be attained by actors long accustomed to each other's methods and characteristics.

Among the chief performers, who figured largely in his many successes, were Charles R. Thorne, Jr., a somewhat stiff but intelligent and forceful actor, whose stalwart form lent verisimilitude to all virile parts; Fred C. Robinson, a sterling and versatile player, who got his schooling with Phelps at Sadler's Wells; McKee Rankin, then a model of slim muscular vigor and excellent in all forms of melodrama; J. H. Stoddart, an eccentric comedian of rare ability, who shone in fierce passion as well as in broad humor and simple pathos; Charles Coghlan; James O'Neil; John Parselle, one of the best of old men; Stuart Robson, who was not much of an actor, but had a quaint and comic personality which brought him great popularity; Sara Jewett, a refined and pleasing actress; Fanny Morant, preeminent in the line of aristocratic haughtiness; Clara Morris, of whom more hereafter; Kate Claxton, Kitty Blanchard, and others of lesser degree. The plays in which they appeared were, almost without exception, good of their kind, but, as few of them had any permanent literary or dramatic value, it will not be necessary to describe them in detail. Among the most successful melodramas were "The Two Orphans," "Rose Michel," "Ferréol," "A Celebrated Case" (which the acting of Charles Coghlan greatly dig-

nified), and "The Danicheffs," all of French origin; "The Lights of London," which was English, and "Two Men of Sandy Bar" and "The False Friend," which were native. This last was by Edgar Fawcett, and was founded upon the notorious Tichborne case, of which all the civilized world had been talking. This was a good deal stranger than most fiction, and might be quoted in justification of much poetic license in a scheme of mistaken identity, but Mr. Fawcett's story was so wildly extravagant that it needed all the cleverness of the company to give it even the semblance of plausibility. But the piece was popular for a time. In "Two Men of Sandy Bar," Bret Harte quite failed to get the charm of his short stories across the footlights.

The best of these was "The Two Orphans," which, in the plentitude of its incident, rapidity and sustained interest of action, and succession of plausible climaxes, is a remarkable specimen of constructive skill in romantic melodrama. And it was perfectly acted. Charles Thorne as the gallant hero, McKee Rankin as the ferocious Jacques, Marie Wilkins as the monstrous Madame Frochard, F. F. Mackay as the wretched and enamored cripple, John Parselle and Fanny Morant as the Compte and Comptess de Linières,

and Kate Claxton as the blind orphan, all gave most notable performances. Such a representation would have been worth while even if the play had been a much poorer dramatic thing than it was. It was a triumph of artistic management, but a triumph that was, in a large degree, accidental. Hart Jackson, who translated and owned the piece, hawked it about New York for months in the vain effort to find a manager who would produce it. A. M. Palmer would have nothing to do with it, although he nibbled at it for a time.

It was Agnes Booth, widow of J. B. Booth, who was first to realize its theatrical value. In an idle hour she found the manuscript lying in a desk in the office of Jarrett & Palmer, then lessees of Booth's Theater. She read it, was immensely impressed—she knew good melodrama when she saw it—and strongly advised Jarrett & Palmer to secure possession of it. While they were debating the matter, A. M. Palmer got wind of the negotiations and Agnes Booth's enthusiasm, and sending for Jackson, who was desperately hard up, bought the play from him for a ridiculously small sum—$700, I believe. Even when the play was in rehearsal he did not fully realize what a prize he had obtained. On the first night the performance dragged—partly owing to the elaborate scenery—and it was long

after midnight when the final curtain fell. By that time the audience had grown thin and somewhat apathetic, and Palmer, always easily discouraged, was inclined to believe that he had met with failure. On the succeeding day he began preparations for putting a new play in rehearsal. These were quickly ended by the ensuing rush of the public.

XI

THE UNION SQUARE THEATER, CLARA MORRIS AND TOMMASO SALVINI

Of plays somewhat distinct in quality from melodrama, "The Banker's Daughter" of Bronson Howard deserves special mention as a play by an American author, dealing with American characters in a somewhat Gallic style, but without any trace of the essentially immoral and morbid sentimentality of the French social plays of the period. The tale of a young girl who marries a rich and honorable man while loving another, in order to save her father from ruin, was not very fresh, and the treatment of it was somewhat conventional and melodramatic, but the piece was well written, the characterization deft, and the incidents theatrically effective. It marked a long upward step in Bronson Howard's dramatic career. Charles Thorne was admirable as the magnanimous husband and Sara Jewett pleasingly sympathetic as the distressed young wife. W. G. Wills's "Olivia" is too well known to need present comment. On this occasion Fanny Davenport was the Olivia, a part which she acted

prettily, but in entirely modern fashion, exciting doubts as to whether she had ever read "The Vicar of Wakefield." The only Goldsmith flavor in the representation resided in the Vicar of Charles Fisher.

The production of Sardou's "Daniel Rochat" was one of the most memorable incidents in the history of this theater. The play, in literary quality, in sincerity of purpose, in ingenuity of construction, and psychological analysis, was one of the author's finest achievements. Discussion of its philosophy here is as impracticable as it would be unprofitable. Briefly it is a study of the inevitable and — as he saw it — the irreconcilable spiritual conflict between a husband and wife devotedly attached to each other, the former a convinced atheist, the latter a saintly religious devotee. In the final test it is the woman of ecstatic faith who proves the stanchest. The brilliant and sincere free-thinker, in the extremity of his passion, is willing to sacrifice his principles to insure the happiness of both, but the woman, realizing the motive of the concession, refuses a compromise which is repugnant to her creed. This was a play of absorbing interest and dramatic power and it was magnificently played. The character of the devotee was exactly suited to the style and temperament

of Sara Jewett, while Thorne—if he failed to express fully the intellectual brilliancy of Rochat—portrayed his passion and his sufferings with most striking power. A complete contrast to "Daniel Rochat" was afforded by "The Rantzaus" (Erckmann-Chatrian), a pretty, idyllic story of the reconciliation effected between two hostile old brothers by their children, who, in spite of paternal prohibitions, have fallen in love. John Parselle and J. H. Stoddart carried off the histrionic honors by their perfect embodiments of the contrasted brothers. "Far from the Madding Crowd," an adaptation by A. R. Cazauran, was chiefly notable for the complete failure of Clara Morris to identify herself with the character of Hardy's heroine, Bathsheba Everdene, a conception which lay far beyond the scope of her dramatic horizon. But, of course, she filled the passionate scenes with vivid emotion.

Miss Morris achieved some signal triumphs at the Union Square, but before considering these brief reference must be made to several of the popular French emotional plays in which she bore no part. One of these, "Led Astray," essentially immoral in its sentimental gloss of illicit passion, drew crowded houses for months, a result chiefly due to the sentimental appeal of the

impassioned acting of Rose Eytinge, an actress whose voluptuous charm was reinforced by genuine dramatic power and artistic skill. "The Mother's Secret," a version of Sardou's insincere, morbid, and incredible but theatrically adroit "Séraphine," was signalized by the gripping acting of Charles Coghlan as Admiral Le Pont, one of those keen, polished, inflexible characters upon which the intellectual method of the actor conferred especial distinction. Mr. Coghlan was equally impressive and skilful as the pitiless, unscrupulous, and wholly impossible Montjoye in "The Man of Success," his authoritative and tactful style helping to veil the inconsistencies of the character. "A Parisian Romance," a thoroughly unwholesome and preposterous emotional concoction of Octave Feuillet, enabled Richard Mansfield to mount his first step on the ladder of fame. Hitherto he had been known only as a clever performer in light and musical comedy. Now he persuaded A. M. Palmer to give him the part of Baron Chevrial—a sordid, lecherous, and treacherous old reprobate—which had been refused by the veteran comedian, J. H. Stoddart, as unworthy of his talents and reputation. Mansfield, little more than a lad, dressed and acted the character according to his own bizarre conception of it, and literally amazed his manager and a

first-night audience by the extraordinarily vital picture which he presented of senile depravity disporting itself in ghastly imitation of youth. It was a genuine creation, grotesque yet horribly life-like, which filled the spectators with a sort of shuddering admiration, and made Mansfield's fortune. As a star in later years, he always kept this character in his repertory, but in course of time he greatly weakened the effect of it by unwise elaboration and exaggeration. This is one of the temptations to which stars yield readily.

To return to Clara Morris, one of the very few American actresses to whom the gift of genius may be properly ascribed. It is by no means easy to define her place in any coldly critical category. She was, first and last, a natural born actress. If judged by her artistic equipment only, she could not establish a claim to any very high place in the ranks of her contemporaries. She was far behind many of them in artistic cunning, but she distanced all of them in flashes of convincing realism and in poignancy of natural emotion. She was often barely respectable as an elocutionist, she was habitually crude, and occasionally unrefined, in pose, gesture, and utterance; she had distressful mannerisms, she could not or did not attempt to modify or disguise her individual personality, her range was

limited—she could not soar into the upper regions of tragedy—but, nevertheless, she showed, especially in emotional crises, a strong grasp of diversified characters within her own boundaries and illuminated them, at intervals, with such a blaze of vivid truthfulness that, for the moment, she seemed to be perfectly identified with them.

Such effects, very rare upon the stage, may safely be accepted as proofs of dramatic genius, of which, of course, there are varying degrees. And Miss Morris's genius, while unmistakable, was of a very special and restricted order. It was not manifested in romance, in high comedy, or in the heroic emotions, whether good or evil, but shone out resplendently in the intensification of the commoner passions of ordinary human nature, and particularly in the depiction of pathetic suffering, whether mute or tearfully eloquent. As she never really succeeded, or came very near to success, in any great part, she can not be called a great actress. It is only in great parts, embodying lofty imagination, that demonstrations of a great interpretative faculty can be made. This test she failed to satisfy. But she was great as a realist in the exaggerated, false, or morbid emotionalism of the current French plays of her period, and displayed high intelligence in a considerable range of English drama.

Miss Morris had already won renown as an emotional actress at Daly's and elsewhere when she appeared in the Union Square Theater in 1874 as Blanche de Chelles, the abominable heroine of Octave Feuillet's "The Sphinx." Psychologically the young woman was a bundle of the grossest inconsistencies, an early example, possibly, of divided and warring personalities. Dominated entirely by her passions, she plots to poison her dearest friend in order to run away with her husband. Then to prove her innocence she agrees to marry another man whom she detests and, as a climax, swallows the poison which she had prepared for her rival. The whole play was nasty rubbish. Miss Morris not only triumphed in it, but actually made the creature she impersonated plausible if not credible. Her acting was extraordinarily specious and subtle, full of fascination, venom, and passion, and, at the last, of a stony-eyed despair which carried the house by storm. It was an ignoble but thrilling achievement. A month later she essayed the character of Julia in Sheridan Knowles's "The Hunchback," which, artificial as it is, contains the elements of flighty, wilful, but pure and honorable womanhood. She had not the artistic training necessary to a really good performance of the part, but these traits she did interpret, and

in the more serious scenes with Clifford and Sir Walter she evinced such an appealing sincerity that minor artistic delinquencies were forgotten. If she was not Julia, she suggested nothing of Blanche de Chelles. Retiring from the Union Square Theater for a time, she entered upon a series of bold experiments elsewhere, adventuring first upon Lady Macbeth, in which she, a modern of the moderns, challenged comparison with Charlotte Cushman and other less noted old-school impersonators of the part.

Her audacity was largely in excess of her equipment, but she made no ridiculous failure. Neither in physique nor in declamatory power was she fitted for parts of tragic dignity and passion. And she did not attempt the impossible. "Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it," was the line that furnished the key-note to her conception. She presented a slight, lithe figure, richly but plainly dressed, a girlish and, but for a certain hardness in the eyes and mouth, an innocent face, surmounted by a coronet and a mass of golden hair—a seductive and dangerous siren, full of lure and guile, amatory, callous, ambitious, and immoral. And such were the characteristics which she successfully portrayed. She did not dominate her husband, but humored, tempted and spurred him.

From the traditional notion of Lady Macbeth she was, of course, leagues away, but not much further than was Ellen Terry. Conservative critics rated her soundly, but her ideal was not entirely devoid of authoritative support. The great Sarah Siddons herself is said to have found warrant for it, but rejected it as unsuited to her majestic style. Henry Irving created a new Macbeth to harmonize with his own artistic limitations and personal idiosyncrasies. Miss Morris did the same thing; but we know that what is but a choleric word for a captain is flat blasphemy for the private soldier. Personally I believe that the true Lady Macbeth is to be found midway between the Morris-Terry and the Siddons-Cushman types. The latter is the grander and more imposing, but the former is more human and, perhaps, more subtle.

With the masses the more heroic embodiment will always take precedence. Miss Morris's assumption had at least the merits of originality, cleverness, and sustained interest. She was never conventional and she made many interesting points. Her elocution, inevitably, was sadly defective. Her reading of Macbeth's letter was, from the old point of view, tame, but it was natural and not ineffectual. In the soliloquy following it there was more of clairvoyant specula-

tion than of murder. Her invocation to the spirits to unsex her was uttered with the concentrated intensity which she could always command. There was more of mockery than ferocity in her manner when she upbraided Macbeth for his vacillation. She almost laughed when she compared him with the "poor cat in the adage." After the murder, in taking the daggers from her demoralized lord, she made it plain that it was only her will-power that enabled her to overcome her own natural feminine weakness. In the banquet scene again she suggested with unerring skill the strain of an outward composure maintained by will-power under the stress of harrowing anxiety and dread. She signified her distress to the audience while offering a courteous front to her amazed guests as if the king's seizure were really the frequent infirmity she asserted it to be. But when the chamber had been cleared she exhibited complete nervous collapse, uttering a distressful wail which, however unauthorized, was wonderfully impressive; and her sleep-walking scene, wholly novel and modern, was intensely pathetic in its denotement of spiritual anguish. The personification as a whole lacked the regal, imperious, imaginative, and masculine qualities of Shakespeare's heroine —it was all woman—but it had brains and con-

sistency, excited admiration and reflection, and, considering the limitations of the actress, it was a memorable achievement.

Next Miss Morris essayed the character of Evadne in Richard Sheil's play, which may be classified as a classic melodrama. In this, too, she disregarded tradition, being unable to comply with it, but with the melodramatic, emotional side of the part she was perfectly qualified to deal, and in the critical scenes she illustrated the conflict between anger, love, and pride with startling vividness. She made a wonderful but somewhat unprofitable emotional display also in a condensed version of Nicholas Rowe's "Jane Shore." Returning to the Union Square Theater, she appeared in a Frenchified version of "East Lynne," called "Miss Multon," in which she made a tremendous hit. Nothing need be said of the play, although it was much better dramatically than some other variations of the story, whose essence is a cloying sentimentality. Miss Morris's acting in it was superb of its kind. As the unrecognized mother tortured by the innocent prattle of her own children, as the broken-hearted woman, desperately seeking reinstatement, fleeing in shame from the home she had polluted and abandoned, and in the closing death scene, she sounded all the depths of poignant

CLARA MORRIS

An Early Portrait

as "Camille"

as "Miss Multon"

pathos. In "Raymonde," an adaptation of the "Mons. Alphonse" of the younger Dumas, she made another extraordinary display of pathos and passion, in the character of a wife with an unsuspected past, who betrays herself to her trusting husband when fate confronts her with her illegitimate child; while as Mercy Merrick in "The New Magdalen" she simply obliterated the performance of Ada Cavendish, the English actress, who was supposed to have made the part her own. In realistic pathos, though not in art, her Camille was the equal of Bernhardt's or Modjeska's. But she has already filled more than her allotted space. During the period under review she was in the plenitude of her powers. In whatever play she appeared she was always the center of interest, except once, and that was when she played Rosalia in "La Morte Civile" in support of Salvini. Then, for once, she suffered eclipse.

Tommaso Salvini was not only incomparably the greatest actor and artist whom I have ever seen, but one who has never had an equal, probably, since the days of Garrick. In physical endowment, in diversity of histrionic genius, and in histrionic training he excelled all his contemporaries. In his prime he was a man of majestic presence, a combination—as some one

said of the young Alfred Tennyson—of Hercules and Apollo. His face, with its spacious forehead, dark eyes, and very slightly aquiline nose, had a mobility which enabled it to express the deepest or most delicate shades of emotion, while his voice was one of the most powerful, flexible, and mellifluous organs ever implanted in a human throat. He was equipped with every histrionic implement and faculty and he had learned the use of them in arduous years of stock company training in boyhood. His tragic genius was so precocious that he won renown in the Saul of Alfieri when he was only sixteen years old. He was in the zenith of his fame when he first reached these shores and thrilled the town with his Othello. And it should be noted here that only those who had the privilege of seeing him in that first engagement—when he was supported by an Italian company including the brilliant Signora Piamonti—ever saw his Othello, as he designed it, at its very best. When playing—as he did in his later engagements—with English support, no actress could be found who was willing to submit herself as Piamonti did to the full fury of his assault.

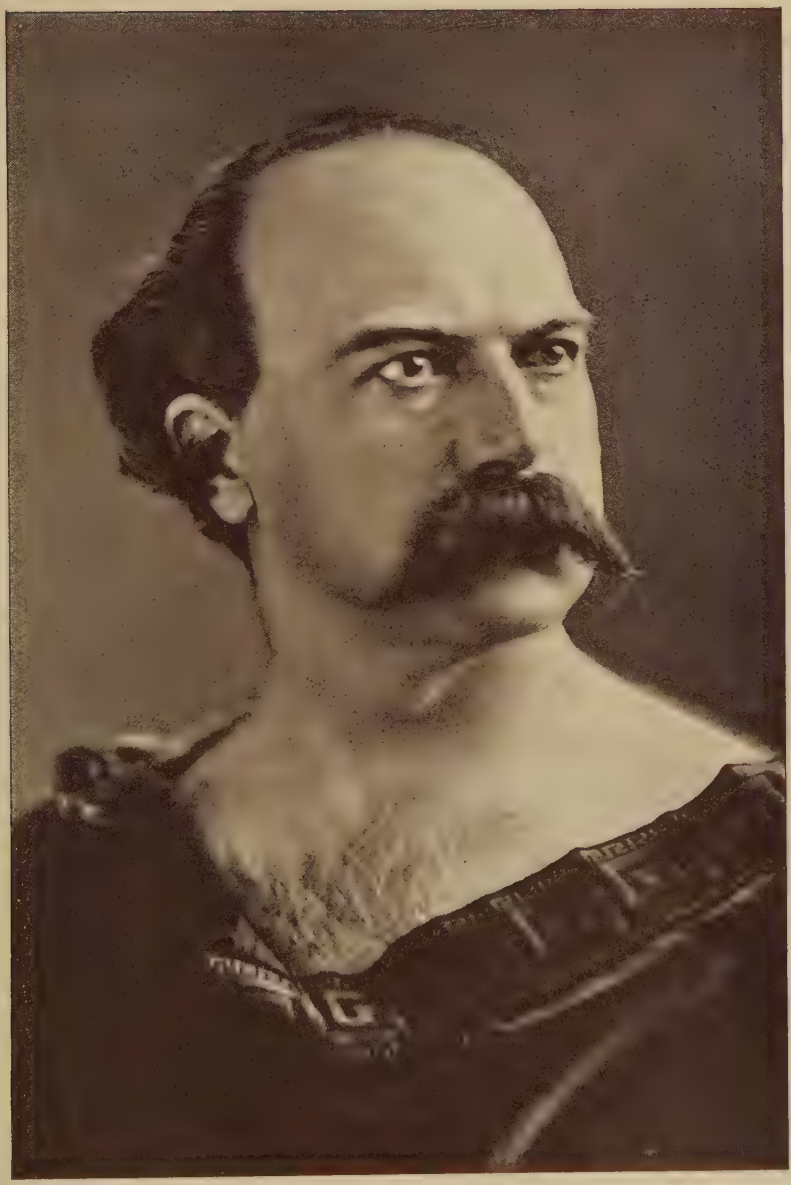
In speaking of his Othello—which I saw very often—it is this Italian representation that I have in mind. It raised a great critical hubbub.

Concerning the superfine quality of the acting, there was no—or very little—difference of opinion, but some of the leading critics—accustomed to the traditional English Othello (generally interpreted scholastically by uninspired performers)—emptied upon the undisturbed head of the great Italian the bitterest vials of their wrath, charging him with utter misconception and vulgarization of the character. They said that he butchered it as he butchered Desdemona. I do not propose to reenter upon that controversy, nor do I believe that it can be settled one way or the other by reference to the text, in which I was letter perfect fifty years ago, and which can be made to prove almost anything. How it was played in Elizabethan days we don't know and we never shall. For myself, I am not a convert to the theory that Desdemona ought to be immolated in the spirit of a religious sacrifice. Murder, especially when prompted by jealousy, founded or unfounded, is murder and unjudicial. Moreover, I am skeptical concerning the propriety of gauging Shakespeare's creations by the rules of the modern expert psychologist. He was a divine poet of marvelous invention and dramatic power, with an almost miraculous grasp of the component elements in human nature, a most intricate and inconsistent thing. His per-

ceptive knowledge was vast, minute, and curious, his scholarship inaccurate and inconsiderable. He seems to have imagined that Moor and negro were convertible terms and endowed them both with British characteristics. He knew they were dark-skinned, amorous, warlike, and ferocious.

In his composition of Othello he added to these ingredients tenderness, courtesy, credulous simplicity, magnanimity, and a liberal allowance of his own poetic and civilized imagination. To all these qualities Salvini in his embodiment gave ample expression, but he knew much more than Shakespeare did about Moorish manners and characteristics. He knew, for instance, that Moors of that period did not use daggers and that where their women were concerned they "saw red." A suspected wife got short shrift in a Moorish harem. Salvini omitted the epileptic fit—following the example of most English actors—although he could have made it very terrible. But he struck Desdemona, according to the old stage direction, and thus indicated the taint of savage ancestry. Actors incapable of presenting this complex character in all its phases—a task making exacting demands upon physical and artistic resources—have excellent practical reasons for excluding both the fit and the blow.

To Salvini the most difficult executive problems



TOMMASO SALVINI

as "Ingomar"

presented no insuperable obstacles. There seemed to be no limit to the range of his emotional expression. He exhibited the power of an Edwin Forrest in combination with the delicacy and subtlety of a Duse. He could overwhelm with a thunderous outburst—free from all suspicion of rant—or electrify with the mute manifestation of suppressed passion. He conceived an Othello who was noble, Oriental, and barbaric, and he embodied it with a power and consistency which made it as real and vital as it was in the highest degree tragic. No actor of our times—not Phelps, Edwin Booth, or John McCullough—ever surpassed him in the authoritative and noble dignity of his calmer moments, but when rage and jealousy stripped the gloss of civilization from him, he was a tiger. His address to the Senate he delivered in a tone of grave, frank, fearless courtesy which was exactly appropriate, and with a nice sufficiency of suggestive gesture—easy, spontaneous, apt, but not ornate—which was wonderfully picturesque and natural. His reception of Desdemona was passionately tender, and he met the insinuation "She has deceived her father and may thee" with a superb gesture of smiling confidence. In the night scene at Cyprus he showed a flash of his fiery and imperious nature as he challenged Iago for an explanation in

trumpet tones compelling prompt obedience, and his eyes blazed as he referred to the awakened Desdemona, but his dismissal of Cassio was curt, cool, and decisive. Iago's poison worked but slowly in his veins. He evinced less susceptibility to it than most Othellos, but when his jealousy once had been aroused, the progressive increase of the distemper was rapid and terrible until it culminated—after a desperate struggle for self-control, illustrated by some of the most appalling facial play ever seen upon the stage—in that frenzied rush upon Iago which, in later days, used to be regarded as the climactic point in the performance. Salvini, his whole form dilated and quivering with rage, flung his tempter to the floor and stood over him with uplifted foot as if about to smash his face. Then he suddenly recovered his self-control, offered his hand to his prostrate victim with a gesture of contrition, jerked him to his feet, and retreated slowly and dejectedly up the stage. It may not have been Shakespearean, it certainly was not dignified, but it was intensely human and dramatic and was executed with a power and sincerity which established perfect illusion.

But the effect of this scene—great as it was—was exceeded (in the Italian version) in the murder of Desdemona. The bed, concealed behind

heavy curtains, was in the rear right-hand corner of the stage. Desdemona, not yet disrobed, alarmed by the menace in Othello's look and manner, gradually retreated as she replied to his interrogations until she reached the left-hand corner of the stage by the footlights. As played by Piamonti—a lovely woman and magnificent actress—she was the personification of pitiful, protesting love gradually resolving into speechless terror. Salvini, convulsed, with fixed and flaming eyes, half-crouched, slowly circled the stage toward her, muttering savagely and inarticulately as she cowered before him. Rising at last to his full height with extended arms, he pounced upon her, lifted her into the air, dashed with her across the stage and through the curtains, which fell behind him. You heard a crash as he flung her on the bed, and growls as of a wild beast over his prey. It was awful—utterly, abominably un-Shakespearean, if you will, but supremely, paralyzingly real—only great genius, imaginative and executive, could have presented such a picture of man, bereft by maniacal jealousy of mercy and reason, reduced to primeval savagery.

Then came a long pause. Emilia knocked at the door, once, twice, thrice, louder and louder, as she called Othello's name. Presently the cur-

tains opened a little and Othello's face, wild eyed, was thrust out, and withdrawn. The tension was almost insufferable. At last Othello, sullen, as if in a dazed calm, came forth and let Emilia and the others in. The madness in him had subsided. There was a gleam of it in his swift attack upon Iago, but he played the concluding scenes with fine pathos and dignity. He made no extravagant moan over his own or Desdemona's fate. Realizing the enormity of his folly and his crime, he knew how to expiate it and avoid long agonies of remorse. He spoke the concluding lines with proud composure, and then swiftly cut his throat with a little scimitar that had been concealed in his girdle, closing the tragedy with a final touch of horrible realism.

In succeeding engagements, playing with English actors, Salvini enacted the murder scene very nearly in accordance with traditional lines, with Desdemona on her couch at his entrance. His performance then was more dignified and poetic, but much less thrilling. Even then he excelled all other actors in the sudden access of insensate fury with which he committed the actual killing. The effect of the face in the curtains he preserved, and it was a notable dramatic stroke.

I have dwelt with some minuteness upon this performance, but must not omit to note one sig-

nificant fact in connection with it, and that is that, except in the instance specified, it never altered. The artistic finish of it was to the full as remarkable as the power. The delicacy of its byplay and facial expression was exquisite. Every motion and attitude was the result of conscientious study, every representation was an exact reproduction of its predecessor. It was possible to make the details of it the subject of a printed record. And yet there was nowhere the least trace of premeditation or suggestion of mechanism. Salvini was far too great an artist to put any trust in those momentary intuitions which ordinary performers dignify by the name of inspiration. Such "inspiration" can only result in the manifestation of the individual self of the performer. Salvini had no mannerisms. His stature and form, indeed, made disguise almost impossible, but his characters presented wide distinctions in gait, gesture, carriage, and manners. His versatility was astonishing. In Italy he was as much admired in high comedy as in tragedy. Ristori, who was not altogether happy in her own American experiences, warned him against trying tragedy in the United States. The success of his "Othello," however, and the failure of his "Sullivan" kept him mainly in the tragic field.

XII

TOMMASO SALVINI AS CONRAD, AS NIGER, AS SAUL, AND AS LEAR

Perhaps the most striking instance of Salvini's histrionic suppleness was given when, by way of contrast to his Moor, he appeared as Conrad in "La Morte Civile" of Giacometti. Briefly this is a study of a once prosperous, honorable, but passionate man, sentenced to prison for homicide, who, after fifteen years of confinement, breaks out of jail. A wretched fugitive, broken in mind and body, seeing in each bush an officer, his one aim is to rejoin the wife who has renounced him, and the little daughter, the idol of his dreams, who long ago has forgotten him and is not even conscious of his existence. He discovers them by chance in the guardianship of an insincere and worldly priest—to whom he has applied for aid—and of a generous infidel. The former, by subtle cross-questioning, forces the truth from him, and then threatens to surrender him to the police if he does not abandon his quest. The infidel sympathizes with him, but points out that as he has lost all his civil rights,

is civilly dead, he can exert no influence over the wife, who hates and dreads him, and can only wreck the happiness of his idolized child by revealing his identity. It is his duty to suffer in silence. Conrad, after a struggle, acquiesces in the sentence that means death to all his hopes, on condition that he may, as a stranger, have one meeting with his child. This grace, by agreement with his wife, Rosalia, to whom he has appealed, is conceded, and he dies of a broken heart as he tries to fold the wondering girl in his embrace.

The whole character is written in a vein of ever deepening melancholy, and Salvini played it with an astounding realism and gripping pathos. In his hunted, weary, footsore, famished convict the impersonator of Othello was totally unrecognizable. The two characters had not a look or a gesture in common. It is impossible now to describe the Conrad in detail. Space will not permit it. The important points in connection with it are that it was perfect in finish and consistency, that it was absolutely true and vital, that it was antipodal to Othello in every respect, and that no effect in it—not even the most poignant—was in the least degree dependent upon physical strength. There was not a single passage of tragic passion in it from beginning to end. Only once did the actor raise his voice in

anger, and that was in the utterance of the word "Fugite," with which, accompanied by a quick gesture of menace, he dismissed the priest after an interview in which every form of pathetic appeal and expostulation had been futile. In that there was a momentary flash of the dangerous passion that had made the man a murderer. There was another passage in which he displayed animation, the description of his escape from prison, which was illuminated by such a wealth of vivid and varied pantomime that no knowledge of Italian was necessary to understand it. The eloquence of gesture and facial play has rarely been so forcibly exemplified.

The remainder of the performance was pure pathos, always subdued, infinitely varied in vocal tone and modulation, vitally truthful, and intensely appealing. Through the last two acts the man was palpably dying of sheer weakness and despair. But there was none of the morbid thrills with which Bernhardt, Morris, and others have embellished their death scenes, no horrible hospital morbidities. The climax came when at the last moment, with his daughfer kneeling at his feet, in compliance with her softening mother's direction, he rallied all his energies to bend forward in his chair to take her to his heart. Then death seized him, and he pitched forward

with a crash headforemost on the stage, where he lay in a heap as the curtain fell. Well do I remember the effect of that scene on the first night he played it here. The house was not one-third full—he and the play were unknown to the public—but the spectators had been constantly enthralled. Now they sat motionless; almost breathless. The hush was that of a death chamber. Finally some one clapped his hands, and the spell was broken. The next instant the theater was filled with plaudits. Men and women leaped to their feet, some stood on their chairs, waved their arms and shouted. Such a demonstration has seldom been seen in New York. Then Salvini same before the curtain, bland, composed, stalwart, smiling. It was like a resurrection.

Presently he revealed his genius in a totally different light in "Sullivan," the play known to us as "David Garrick." When the French version of the play was produced in Paris the management thought it wise to substitute the name of some prominent contemporary English actor for that of Garrick, and as Barry Sullivan was just then much in evidence on the London "posters" they selected him. So Garrick became Sullivan in Italy also. The piece is tricky, conventional, farcical, and often absurd, especially in its supposed reflection of civic life in old London,

but undoubtedly provides excellent opportunities for a skilled comedian. Lawrence Barrett played the leading part with genuine emotional power, but was ill at ease in the lighter scenes; E. A. Sothern and Charles Wyndham were admirable in the lighter but unconvincing in the serious episodes. Salvini was immensely superior to all three. He played throughout in the vein of light comedy, as a courtly, chivalrous, intellectual, and ardent gentleman, conferring dignity upon a piece completely unworthy of his abilities. Of course, he indulged in no buffooneries, but in the polished ease of his drawing-room manner he gave no hint of the tragedian. In his recognition of his beloved ideal—in the girl whom he had pledged himself to disgust—he adopted no such theatrical artifice as Sothern and Wyndham, who staggered backward and grasped a chair for support, but created a far stronger and more natural effect by the sudden rigidity of his attitude, and an involuntary catching of the breath, as if for the moment he had been petrified. But he recovered instantly and bowed low, as if to conceal his face. His subsequent behavior to her was delicately suggestive of compassionate sorrow. In the drunken scene he did what neither Sothern nor Wyndham could do. They were alternately drunk or sober. His pretended inebriety

was continuous, but beneath the veil of feverish gayety could be discerned the throbbings of a heart tortured by a sense of outraged love and bitter degradation. It was a wonderful example of histrionic transparency. In the final scene with the heroine he distanced all rivals. The fervor and tenderness in his wooing could not have been surpassed by Fechter, and his appeal to the girl's sense of honor and duty vibrated with passion and pathos.

His next triumph was won as Niger, the gladiator in Saumet's tragedy, or romantic and poetic melodrama, "The Gladiator." No greater contrast could be imagined than that between his refined and intellectual Sullivan and the savage animalism of the brutal and ferocious barbarian. Some critics preferred his Niger to his Othello. I did not, as it required much less imaginative power, but it exhibited much of the physical prowess and tragic passion of the Moor and fell foul of no honored traditions. The play is a fine work, both in a literary and dramatic sense, but Niger is not a complex character. He is vast in bulk and passion. Salvini made him colossal in every respect. His first great effect was wrought in the delivery of the fine speech descriptive of his wrongs, his hunger for revenge, and his defiance of the gods who had deserted

him. The murder of his wife was related with an appalling pantomime. But it was in the fourth act, in the famous arena scene, that the full splendor of his physical resources was shown. Standing alone in the amphitheater, he completely filled the stage with the boldness of his action and the thunderous vigor of his declamation. In challenging the onslaught of the wild beasts, his braggadocio was superb. In his unwillingness to execute a defenceless woman there was at first no jot of moral compunction, only a sort of professional disgust. But when he discovered that the intended victim was Neodamia, the one object of his affection, his appeal to the populace for mercy was thrilling in the wildness of its supplication, and his offer of universal combat tremendous in its ferocious arrogance. But he attained to even greater heights when, having at last resolved that it was more merciful to kill the girl than leave her to the lions, he recognizes in her the daughter for whom he had long been searching. He seemed the center of a veritable hurricane, a whirlwind, of emotions. Love, rage, fear, pity, desperation, succeeded each other with lightning rapidity, and all were depicted with an energy that appeared exhaustless. This physical energy was a most impressive feature in the exhibition, but the constant manifesta-

tion of intellectual purpose and control was still more striking. There was no rant, no aimless, hysterical contortion or shrieking. The actor was always master of himself and of his art. I am not exaggerating. As I survey the theatrical firmament as I have known it, Salvini shines among the constellations *velut inter ignes luna minores.*

I have selected these illustrations because they embody the more salient characteristics of his acting, as well as his personality. Of his other impersonations in this neighborhood I must speak briefly. Beside his Ingomar all other interpretations of the part appear dull, prosaic, and puny. He filled it with the spirit of romance, barbaric humor, the passion of liberty, and the atmosphere of the forest. He increased the apparent value of the play by enriching the author's scheme with his own decorative detail, which is, of course, the legitimate function of the inspired romantic actor. The gradual subjugation and transformation of the rugged, fierce, but generous and impressionable barbarian by the enchantment of love were signified by innumerable delicate gradations—a thousand little subtle artifices—of which even such a performer as John McCullough was entirely incapable. In the more passionate scenes, it need scarcely be said, he was splendidly

imposing and picturesque. As an example of realism, informed by artistic imagination, the mere process of his awakening from slumber in the first scene was a masterpiece.

He was superb again as the Biblical Samson, a character which his vast bulk enabled him to assume with plausibility, presenting a most tragic picture of gigantic ruin and despair in his blindness and degradation. His acting in the final scene was inspirational enough to lend illusion to a theatrical scene of most distressful unreality. But the incident that stirred his audience to most enthusiasm was the relation, in the first act, of his fight with the lion, in which the vividness of his gesture made the rending of the beast almost visible.

His Saul, in Alfieri's Biblical tragedy, I am sorry to say that I never saw. It was accounted among his greatest triumphs. His King Lear was a magnificent creation, but for various reasons failed to meet with the appreciation it deserved. In the first place, his support and the Italian version of the play were both irretrievably bad. In the second, his conception was very generally assailed by the critics as unmajestic and un-Shakespearean. There was a certain amount of truth in both these accusations. Undoubtedly the actor was more concerned about

the human attributes of the character than the regality of its manners. Possibly he reflected that Lear reigned in a primitive period, had grown old in authority, cared more for the substance than the shadow, and was likely to carry himself with dignified simplicity, sure in the possession of prerogatives that had not yet been questioned. This was the attitude he adopted.

As for the alleged un-Shakespearean quality of the performance, this charge really meant that it disregarded, or was in conflict with, many venerable traditional points and customs of the English stage—and it was true. But it does not in the least degree follow that the interpretation was therefore opposed to the spirit of the text. Stage laws are not those of the Medes and Persians. As a matter of fact, there actually were many passages—none, however, of paramount importance—where Salvini missed the Shakespearean meaning, for the simple reason that the Italian version was often, and for obvious reasons, so inadequate or misleading that, as he knew very little English, he had no means of divining it. This was especially the case in the dialogues with the Fool, where many English actors have been hopelessly at sea. But all the leading essentials of the situation he grasped with perfect comprehension and capability—from his own

Italian points of view. It may be freely admitted that his reading was foreign. He conceived an old, partly barbaric chieftain, hale, autocratic, and passionate, driven to madness and death by the treachery and usurpation of his unnatural daughters, and the torturing realization of an impotence brought about by his own folly, exposure, and despair. And this is Lear. In the opening scenes Salvini was far less tempestuous than most English actors. It was only by his slow, heavy tread that his king denoted age. He was gray, not white, and his voice had lost none of its resonance. He announced the partition of his kingdom with the curt decision of a man whose word was law and irrevocable. He chuckled good-naturedly at the exuberant protestations of Goneril and Regan. When Cordelia declined to subscribe to them, he leaned backward on the throne and gazed at her in blank amazement. There was no explosion of passion, but, as she remained stedfast, the storm gathered on his brow, until, finally, he uttered his renunciation in low, deliberate tones, vibrating with inflexible purpose and mortal pain. Upon the protesting Kent he turned with a flash of fury, but checked himself and stood erect, motionless and formidable, for many seconds, before he delivered the sentence of banishment with a Jove-like emphasis.

The actor missed many "points" and opportunities for applause, but it was evident that his restraint was the result of calculated design and in accordance with his view of the character. The tragic passion in Lear was not to find free vent until his wits began to turn. It was manifested with tremendous effect in the curse upon Goneril, while in the mad scenes there were lightning-like eruptions, in alternation with delicate strokes of senile humor or wistful pathos. Whether or not the interpretation was Shakespearean, it was grand, imaginative, and profoundly affecting. Nothing could be more touching than his recognition of Cordelia or his lament over her corpse. The whole embodiment was worthy of association with this master work of human genius.

In Hamlet Salvini was out of his element. He furnished a superbly romantic and melodramatic performance, and that was all. His Hamlet was essentially a man of action—although dilatory in the matter of his father's murder—of a fervent and passionate temper whose assumption of madness was entirely feigned. Of the poetic and tender melancholy, the philosophic mood, the vacillating, perplexed nature, he suggested little. His Prince would never have wasted time in soliloquy, but would have gone straight back to

the castle after his encounter with the Ghost and run the murderous King through the body. His own view of the character was presented with his usual brilliancy of design and execution, and was admirable as a bit of romantic acting, but never reached the soul of the matter. Somewhat similar criticism is applicable to his Macbeth. This, too, was magnificent in execution, but melodramatic and romantic rather than truly tragic, although evincing plenty of tragic power. The external Macbeth was perfectly portrayed, not the inner. It was a brilliant, superficial study, implying an imperfect comprehension of the text. This Macbeth was consistently bloody, bold, and resolute, and in inches and aspect a most imposing figure. He needed no spur to his intent. There was murder in his eye and voice when he warned his wife of Duncan's approaching visit. When he said, "We will speak further," it was with an expression of fixed resolve. His later refusal "to proceed further in this business" was prompted solely by desire to retain "golden opinions." His "If we should fail" was purely speculative. When his wife unfolded her plan, he embraced her rapturously in admiration of her extraordinary qualities. His "dagger soliloquy," thrillingly impressive in its rapt intensity, betokened superstitious wonderment

rather than spiritual horror. In his description of the murder his vivid pantomime was masterly. In the banquet scene his superstitious fear was terrible, but he quickly rallied when the vision disappeared. His closing scenes were played in paroxysmal moods of despairing ferocity. His impersonation was luridly pictorial—perfect in execution—but he did not give Shakespeare's Macbeth.

XIII

DEALING ESPECIALLY WITH EDWIN BOOTH

In natural order of artistic precedence, Edwin Booth claims consideration after Salvini. The two were contemporaries and for many years Booth was the recognized leader of the American tragic stage. Less virile than the muscular Forrest, whom he succeeded, he excelled him in subtlety, brains, grace, and real dramatic fire, while, at his best, he was superior to E. L. Davenport—a far more versatile performer—John McCullough, Lawrence Barrett, and other less prominent rivals. He owed his preeminence partly to inherited ability, partly to his early and arduous experiences in every known form of theatrical entertainment, from negro minstrelsy upward, and partly to his personal charm. To the public he was endeared by his misfortunes and his talents.

Although a good many years have slipped away since he last graced the footlights, his life has been the subject of so much critical and biographical comment that his history and his art must still be fresh in the memory of most persons inter-

ested in the theater. To avoid mere repetition, I shall, in speaking of him, confine myself to some general personal impressions.

He was a great but not, I think, a very great actor, and a most accomplished artist, expert in all stage technique and artifice. His control of facial expression was remarkable. His countenance was handsome, pale, intellectual, and refined. His long black hair, large and luminous dark eyes, somewhat Hebraic nose, and strong mouth indicated a character both poetic and resolute. In frame he was not large, but well knit, nicely proportioned, and graceful; his voice was sonorous and melodious. In his early days he was somewhat addicted to the vice of "mouthing," but he conquered this, and afterward his elocution was singularly clear, crisp, and significant, trumpet-like in passionate declamation, soft, mellow, and flexible in moments of pathos. His voice had not the organ-like volume of Salvini's, but was a rich and beautiful instrument upon which he played with great skill.

When I first saw him he was in the fulness of his prime and his popularity. His famous engagement at the old Winter Garden, and his disastrous but brilliant enterprise in his own theater in Twenty-third Street—a temple long ago demolished—were ended. He had outlived the

blasting effects of his mad brother's crime, and recovered from injuries in a carriage accident which once threatened to disable him permanently. A long era of prosperity and honor, on both sides of the Atlantic—sometimes sadly darkened by peculiarly cruel domestic troubles—was before him. In his life the sweet and the bitter were mingled in almost equal porportions; and there can be little doubt that his private afflictions, most courageously endured, added to his artistic temperament that touch of grave and tender melancholy so well suited to his Hamlet and some other impersonations.

They never dampened the artistic fire in him, but they may, perhaps, have been partly accountable for the strange indifference which, in his middle career, he showed to the capacity of the support which he received upon the stage. I saw him in everything that he played from 1875 up to the date of his retirement, and—until he came under the management of Lawrence Barrett —I can not recall any occasion upon which he was surrounded with a decently adequate cast. The tacit assent which he gave to some of the worst features of the star system was deplorable. His own brilliant work helped to keep the literary drama upon the stage, but left it desolate when he departed.

It is as the representative Hamlet of his day that he is now, perhaps, chiefly remembered, and beyond all question this was an exquisite bit of artistry. Personally I have always been inclined to award the palm to the early embodiment of Charles Fechter—except in the matter of oratory—as more nearly fulfilling the Shakespearean ideal. It was more human, more consistent as a personality, if less cunning, less brilliantly cut, than Booth's. The latter's always seemed to me more ingenious than real, as does that of Forbes-Robertson. It absolutely bristled with points, each of which seemed in itself absolutely sound and full of illumination as it was presented, but which could not, when assembled, be made to harmonize. Physically it was a realization of the traditionally ideal Hamlet—dignified, courteous, meditative, and deeply sympathetic. In carriage and address it was superfine. In the talk to the players, the encounter with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, in the quizzical chat with the grave-diggers, the manner—whether of friendly condescension, shrewd reproof, or the cynically humorous—was always princely; grave, deliberate, and delicately apt.

It would be unreasonable to ask for a more satisfying exposition of these passages. The reading of the philosophic soliloquies—the "To

be or not to be" and "What a piece of work," for instance—illuminated the beauty and the significance of the lines with the fullest radiance, while the delivery of "Oh, that this too, too solid flesh, etc." was most moving in its pathetic despair. The whole business of the play scene was charged with a tragic, or rather melodramatic, intensity that made it extraordinarily effective, while the fiery passion thrown into the inquiry, "Is it the king?" after the killing of Polonius, was electrical. All these individual episodes, and others—the renunciation scene with Ophelia, the ranting outburst at her grave, etc.—were enacted with the keenest comprehension and ample power of execution, but yet exhibited radical discrepancies of character that interfered with absolute illusion. It was, to my mind, a mosaic of precious but ill-adjusted gems rather than a perfect jewel.

In characters of heroic proportions, such as Macbeth, Othello, and Lear, Edwin Booth was barred from the supreme heights of illusion by physical limitations. He had a firm intellectual grasp of them, he had imagination and an abundance of nervous energy and intensity, but in the great crises of emotion lacked massiveness and grandeur. In these respects he was not the equal of Forrest, E. L. Davenport, or John McCul-

lough, although superior to them in many others. Of the parts specified, he was most successful, perhaps, in Lear. This was a notably fine embodiment, dignified, picturesque, fiery, ingenious, and deeply pathetic in its forlorn misery. Oratorically it was often superb. The actor's perception was seldom, if ever, at fault, but he was unable to give full expression to his own ideal. He depicted a wreck, but failed to indicate the colossal proportions of the original edifice. But his acting, in design and execution, was of a very high order.

In the opening scenes his whole demeanor was venerable and royal. In imprecation he was torrential and intense, but not terrible. He excited more pity for himself than fear for his daughters. He could not, like Salvini, assume the part of a Jove launching thunderbolts. His passion quivered with intensity, but was not overpowering. It was as the poor, crazed old wanderer, with the rags of his majesty still clinging around him, in the scenes with Kent, Edgar, and the Fool, that he was most vital and poignant. His signification of an intellect shattered but not entirely destroyed, with its recurrent gleams of wisdom, authority, wistful humor, and vengeful rage, was wonderfully adroit and natural. His recognition of Cordelia, on his awakening

from madness, was one of the gems of his performance, a little masterpiece of natural pathos.

The torments and rage of Othello were beyond him, but in the earlier acts of the tragedy he was admirable, if never great. He was a dignified, authoritative soldier, simple, unsuspicious, and loving. His love for Desdemona was ardent, but tenderly respectful. His address to the Senate was a model of frank, manly, modest, and persuasive utterance. The scene of Cassio's dismissal he carried through in exactly the right spirit of angry military promptitude and outraged friendship. And he was wholly successful —and artistically subtle—in the earlier manifestations of the growing jealousy fostered by the cunning devilry of Iago. But his portrayal of the ensuing paroxysms of rage and anguish were deficient in power and sincerity. He could only suggest the moral and spiritual demoralization of which he was the victim. The murder, of course, he enacted in the sacrificial mood, and he did it impressively, with a fine admixture of compassionate tenderness and inexorable, fatalistic resolution. In the closing incidents, notably in his heartbroken cry of "Fool, fool, fool!" he played with fine effect.

Nor did he rise to any lofty heights in Macbeth, of which his impersonation was intellectual

but not inspired. His murderous Thane satisfied neither the eye nor the imagination. It was only in the portrayal of the superstitious horror that "distils a man almost to jelly" that he was vividly realistic. But even then his slight and quivering form betokened an abject cowardice incompatible with the character. His Macbeth was essentially a weak man, the tool rather than the accomplice of his wife, who went to the murder of Duncan rather as an assassin under compulsion than as a man whose ambition dominated his conscience, and whose waning scruples had been exorcised by a will more single than his own. In the dagger scene he was more picturesque and melodramatic than tragic.

His best work was done after the murder. The remorse in his delivery of the lines on the "murdered sleep" and his despairing cry, "Wake Duncan with thy knocking," was acute. He made, too, a splendidly effective, pathetic, and poetic point after the banquet scene, when he slowly took the coronet from his head and sat gazing at it with a look of unutterable wretchedness and despair. The weaker elements of the character he threw into strong relief, the higher imaginative side he blurred.

His Richard II. must be accounted among his most notable artistic achievements, but when I

saw him in the part he played in a miserably mangled version of the piece with the support of Augustin Daly's company, which was hopelessly inadequate to the task. Scarcely enough of the text was left to make the chronicle even decently coherent or intelligible, the necessary personages being reduced to the condition of mere "feeders" to Mr. Booth, who was the whole show. Not until the third act did he have much chance, but from then on his embodiment—it was a genuine embodiment—of the weak, fallen, wilful, haughty, and passionate King was remarkably subtle, finished, and striking. The part lay wholly within his range. His reception of Bolingbroke's envoy was admirable in the dignity born of despair. When bidden to descend to the "base court" to meet his foe, his acting was most powerful. The biting sarcasm of his speech contrasted strikingly with the mock humility of his bowed form and the anguish in his face, and throughout the ensuing scene with his conqueror he vitalized complex emotions with extraordinary skill. It was a rare demonstration of histrionic art pursued under difficulties, and of the insufficiency of modern actors in old plays.

In "The Merchant of Venice" Mr. Booth was seen at his best. He acted Shylock often, and elaborated his study of the part until it was a

perfect picture, finished to the nails. The whole gamut of the emotions of the old Jew lay within his artistic reach, and he played upon them with infinite certainty and dexterity. His portrayal was a most harmonious blend of racial prejudice and hate, insatiate avarice, dignity, craft, revengeful passion, and abject defeat. He made no pretence of elevating it with any touch of patriarchal or romantic nobility. In his normal state he was the substantial merchant, staid, hard, suspicious, alert, with a vein of cynical humor. In making his bargain with Antonio, the ultimate purpose of it was deftly concealed beneath a veil of slightly transparent banter. His profession of amity was clearly conventional, but his emphasis was grimly jocose, not malicious, though the smile on his face was crafty.

The ferocious element in him was not revealed until the street scene, in which his exhibition of mixed emotions—wounded avarice, rage, scorn, revengeful hate, and domestic grief—was masterful. His "Let him look to his bond!" was pregnant with concentrated fury and savage anticipation. In the trial scene his cool, stony, dogged inflexibility was of most deadly omen. His "Till thou canst rail the seal from off this bond," was given with imperturbable and assured insolence; his "Is that the law?" carried the very essence of

amazed horror and incredulity. In his collapse every faculty of mind and body seemed paralyzed. He spoke in broken murmurs like a man in a bad dream. It was a complete and vital interpretation. One is inclined to apply to it the certificate given to old Macklin's, "This is the Jew that Shakespeare drew."

That Booth could give fine expression to the nobler attributes of humanity, if not in their highest imaginative development, he proved abundantly by his Brutus and parts of his Othello and Hamlet, but it is nevertheless a fact that he was most triumphant in characters containing a baser alloy. His alert manner, his flashing eyes, his crisp, somewhat metallic utterance, his capacity for fierce passion, his general suggestion of an agile mentality, constituted a most valuable equipment for parts in which the intellectual predominated over the moral or the sentimental.

His Iago has always, and rightfully, been considered one of his masterpieces. In his later years it became a trifle stiff and labored, but in his prime it was the incarnation of smooth, eager, supple, and fathomless devilry. Entirely plausible, with no hint of venomous intrigue except in the soliloquies, it somehow seemed to be enveloped in an aura of evil. There was a suggestion of infernal enjoyment in the zest with

which he marked each progressive step in the fabric of his plot. A much more wary and less headstrong man than Othello might have been beguiled by his apparent honesty. His duplicity was altogether Machiavellian, exactly adapted to time and circumstance. His most pernicious lies to Othello—concerning Cassio's dream and the handkerchief, for instance—he administered in the most deceptive form, that of an involuntary confidence. Only at the last, when, bound, bleeding, and doomed to torture, he said, "Demand me nothing: what you know, you know. Hereafter will I never more speak word," with a horrible gritting of clenched teeth, did he reveal himself, to his intimates, the callous and malignant fiend.

It was a brilliant achievement, and some of its qualities could be traced in his Richard III, by all odds the best of his time, and the only one that reflected the intellectual power which that able but unscrupulous monarch undoubtedly possessed. He played it, in the theater that was formerly his own, in the condensed Shakespearean play—not the Cibber abomination—with Mrs. Waller as Queen Margaret and a fairly competent cast. In the earlier acts his performance was most admirable. He really did personify a man with the brains to conceive and the audacity to carry out the monstrous policies ascribed to

him. Lightning perception, prompt resolve, cynical hypocrisy, remorseless ambition, and indomitable will were all denoted in his conception. In the scenes with Lady Anne, Buckingham, and Clarence, and in the council chamber, the many-sided character and dangerous nature of the man were indicated with rare vividness and skill. But in the later acts the impersonation degenerated into somewhat robustious melodrama. As a whole it was a memorable piece of acting. In recent days there has been nothing remotely comparable with it, except the first act of Irving's Gloster.

Curiously enough, Booth made some of his most imposing emotional displays in romantic or eccentric parts of second-rate caliber. His Richelieu, in Lord Lytton's play, was, in spite of its inherent theatricality, a masterpiece of technical execution—full of dry humor, patriotic exaltation, paternal tenderness, craft, and mental vigor—and in the defiance of Baradas, the "awful circle" speech, rose to a height of dramatic passion that was really magnificent. He was equally successful in that tricky, romantic drama of Tom Taylor, "The Fool's Revenge" ("Rigoletto"), revelling in the part of the deformed, sarcastic, and revengeful jester, Bertuccio, whom he endowed with bitter, agile, and

EDWIN BOOTH

as "Iago," in "Othello" as "Hamlet" as "Cardinal Richelieu"

malignant mockery. It is a showy but not a highly imaginative or difficult character, but in the scene in which, as a cruelly deluded supplicant, he batters at the door behind which are the ravishers to whom he has unwillingly betrayed his own daughter, he invested it with a tragic power and eloquence, rising to a perfect frenzy of agonized and pitiful fury and despair.

He rose again to a wonderful pitch of baffled wrath as Sir Giles Overreach, in the last scene where the defeated schemer becomes the prey of his own savage passions, and gave an extraordinary melodramatic display as Sir Edmund Mortimer in the now virtually forgotten play, "The Iron Chest."

He was a well-graced actor, if ever there was one, and by his personal achievement he fairly won the distinguished place which he will always occupy in the annals of the American stage. But for the literary and artistic theater itself, for the preservation or elevation of the art of which he was so able a professor, he did little or nothing. He was content, during the greater part of his career, to accept and profit by the conditions which were undermining and ruining it. Able to fill theaters by his unassisted genius and prestige, he acquiesced in a system devised to fill the pockets of stars and managers, and habitually

acted with scratch companies of incompetent and untrained players, histrionic scarecrows. In this way he helped to discredit the masterpiece in which he shone. He left no disciples, no successor to take up his mantle when he discarded it. When he made his final bow the curtain—so far as the American stage was concerned—fell also upon the legitimate drama. Whether it is to be raised again time will show.

Even popular actors are sometimes conscious of their own limitations. I am able to give an authentic anecdote in support of this assertion. It was recalled to my memory by the accidental discovery of a portrait of E. A. Sothern, who in his earlier days firmly believed that he was possessed of tragic genius. Bitter experience taught him that he was mistaken, and in time he could laugh good-humoredly over his juvenile delusion. He and Edwin Booth were great friends. One morning, in the eighties, they were discussing old memories in Sothern's rooms in the Gramercy Park Hotel. As Booth left I entered and Sothern repeated to me some of their conversation. "We were talking," he said, "among other things, of Will Stewart, the old dramatic critic, and his capacity for apt and cutting definition. By way of illustration I quoted his remark about my Claude Melnotte, that it

'exhibited all the qualities of a poker except its occasional warmth.' I suppose, "I added," that my performance was about as bad as anything ever seen upon the stage. Ned chuckled quietly for a minute and then, with a quizzical smile, said, 'You never saw my Romeo, did you?' " Inveterate joker as I knew him to be, Sothern's manner convinced me that he was reporting the incident in good faith. Some time after this he and "Billy" Florence, a kindred spirit, volunteered to play Othello and Iago at a benefit performance and disappointed a huge and expectant audience by acting with perfect seriousness and, of course, complete incompetence. They found abundant personal satisfaction, doubtless, in the fact that they had successfully sold both the tickets and the spectators.

XIV

CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN, HELENA MODJESKA, AND BERNHARDT

The name of Charlotte Cushman must not be omitted from any record, however desultory, of the American stage in the closing years of the nineteenth century, but I only saw her, in 1874, in three characters, Queen Katherine, Lady Macbeth, and Meg Merrilies—and I can not, therefore, pretend to any authoritative analysis of her art. These were among her most popular impersonations, and even in her decline she manifested extraordinary powers in them. When in the full possession of her vigor and fire she doubtless was very great. She had played almost everything in her time, was expert in every mystery of stage device, and, even in age, had an almost masculine force. Her speaking voice was abnormally deep, but flexible. It could utter melting notes or vibrate harshly with terrible passion.

Few women have been so successful in male characters as she was in earlier days. She made

a genuine success as Romeo and enacted Wolsey without incurring ridicule. In melodrama she could be terrible. In other words, she was an old-school actress, who excelled in many parts and was competent in nearly all. There was a certain degree of "staginess"—at any rate in her late maturity—about her acting, which made frequent revelations of calculated mechanism. She was old-fashioned, deliberate, and certain. There never was the least doubt of the resonant and efficient quality of the stroke when she made it. Artful pauses—which never implied hesitancy—were followed by swift, bold, and perfect execution. Each action was inspired and governed by an unfaltering intelligence.

Her passions were heroic, her pathos more profound than delicate. She painted nearly everything with unmixed colors. Her designs were bold rather than subtle. Her Katherine, owing nothing to personal charm or splendor of habiliments, was a superb presentment of outraged majesty, conscious of humiliation, but regal in every look and gesture, even as a supplicant. She completely dominated the stage in the court scene. In addressing the King she evinced respect, with an occasional note of reproachful tenderness, without any loss of dignity or any intimation of a sense of being on her defense. In

the allusion to her children her voice quavered with an apparently unmasterable emotion. Her challenge to Wolsey, "Lord Cardinal, to you I speak," rang with an imperial disdain.

To the sarcasm in her subsequent interview with the two cardinal legates she imparted resplendent emphasis. The fine lines embodying her summary of Wolsey were beautifully declaimed. In the death scene, the restlessness and querulousness of sickness and suffering were interpreted with minute and startling fidelity, but she never forgot that she was a dying queen, and her actual dissolution, though closely realistic, was purely pathetic. The whole embodiment was a piece of theatrical artistry which could not be duplicated anywhere on the English-speaking stage to-day. Nor, if she were yet alive, could she find such competent support—it was not brilliant—as was supplied to her by the Wolsey of George Vandenhoff or the King of John Jack.

I do not believe that her conception of Lady Macbeth was the right one, but the power with which she realized it compelled admiration and wonder. It was melodrama "in excelsis." Founded upon the pattern left by Mrs. Siddons—which, doubtless, has lost many of its true outlines in the course of several generations of stage reproduction—it exhibited no characteristic trait

of feminine nature except its occasional physical weakness. This Lady Macbeth was a splendid virago, more than masculine in ambition, courage, and will, more bloody, bold, and resolute than she wished her husband to be. She was the source and mainspring of the whole tragedy.

She was inhuman, terrible, incredible, and horribly fascinating. She resolved upon the murder of Duncan at the moment she heard of the prediction of the witches, and thereafter proceeded toward it without hesitation or qualm. Her whole sanguinary purpose was revealed in the devilish emphasis of her "And when goes hence?" Pity and remorse were unknown to her. She was clearly capable, as she declared, of taking children from her breast and dashing out their brains. After the murder she exhibited a momentary feminine faintness at the thought of looking upon the victims, but promptly rallied, went about her task with composed resolution, and was calmly scornful when she showed her husband that her hands were of the color of his. And this conception she maintained stedfastly in every changing scene. Even in her somnambulism—a marvel of technical detail—the pathetic was absent. She was tormented by harrowing anxiety and dread, but not by remorse.

There was small scope for her dramatic genius,

of course, in such a part as Meg Merrilies, which, in the stage version, retains little of the romantic distinction it possesses in the imaginative pages of Walter Scott. But she invested it with a weird mysticism, rude dignity, and tempestuous passion. Her performance was more valuable theatrically than important artistically. She created a powerful effect in her recognition of Harry Bertram, gave to the fortune-telling scene mystical significance and pathos, and her declamatory power was employed with rousing effect in the denunciation of Dick Hatteraick. The death was portrayed with solemn and pathetic realism. She bade farewell to the New York stage as Lady Macbeth, and the most distinguished men in the community, representing art, commerce, letters, and the learned professions, assembled to do her honor.

It was in December, 1877, that Helena Modjeska, the Polish actress, made her first appearance upon the New York stage, after several brilliant engagements in the West. She labored under many disadvantages. She was unknown, she was a foreigner, she did not speak English well, and her art had a daintiness that appealed to the connoisseur rather than the mass; but it was not long before her genius won for her a prominent place among American stars.

SARAH BERNHARDT

as "Camille"

as "Hamlet"

She was one of the really great actresses of her era. In my own mind I have always ranked her very little, if any, below Sarah Bernhardt. The latter, unquestionably—being physically far more powerful than her Polish rival, speaking in her own tongue, and possessing an incomparable voice—could rise upon special occasions, as in "Phèdre," to peaks of tragic expression to which Modjeska could not attain; but, on the other hand, Modjeska, great in classic tragedy, like Bernhardt (if not altogether so great), was her equal in the modern social emotional drama, while in romantic poetic comedy she was peerless in characters entirely outside the sphere of Sarah's comprehension or talents.

It is impossible, for instance, to think of the latter as Viola or Rosalind, nor could she comprehend Ophelia or Juliet in their entireties. The exhibitions which the illustrious Frenchwoman gave in her later years in "Hamlet" and "L'Aiglon," and those melodramatic falsities specially designed for the display of her histrionic specialties by that master craftsman, Sardou, are not, I think, to be taken into consideration in any serious estimate of her true genius. They were often wonderful in their way, showed intermittently flashes of the rare, delicate inspirations of the earlier Sarah, but in the main

were marred by manifest artifice and physical strain. Amazing in their vigor, they contributed to notoriety rather than fame. These things Modjeska could not have done; but in the legitimate realm of artistic and imaginative histrionism her range was, I think, the wider.

It was Stephen Fiske who first introduced her to the New York public, in "Adrienne Lecouvreur." Her Adrienne became a more highly colored and finished embodiment afterward, but from the first it carried a peculiar charm of girlish innocence, tenderness, and freshness, underlying the sophistication of the actress. Possibly her innocence was less cunning than the dove-like meekness which Bernhardt knew so well how to assume, but it had more in it of the simplicity of nature. She could not recite "The Two Pigeons" with the exquisite musical vocalism of the Frenchwoman, nor could she emulate the blasting fire and scorn with which Sarah made so powerful an effect in the clash with the Duchesse de Bouillon, but, with the truest artistic intuition, she husbanded her emotional resources in the early acts, constantly suggesting, however, the glowing sincerity of her hero worship for Saxe, and reserving all her energies for the delirium and despair of the concluding scenes, which she portrayed with ample power and most

affecting pathos. It was a lovely, intensely sympathetic, and brilliant impersonation.

In her Camille, again—a flagrantly artificial, and theatrical, and specious character, whose falsity is gross and palpable—she exhibited an artistry which sometimes gave it an aspect of plausibility. She played it with an abandonment which was at once reckless and refined. Without disguising the traits of her profession —her coquetry, though never vulgar, was bold, even had touches of audacity—she contrived to suggest that she was acting a part dictated by circumstances rather than inclination, and wore a yoke which, if she had learned to bear it easily, yet sometimes galled. She was not rude, as many Camilles are, even to De Varville. She tolerated him as a convenient but somewhat irksome necessity. From Armand, at first, though clearly attracted to him, she seemed to shrink, as from a forbidden pleasure which she coveted but dare not entertain. It was a subtle touch, and it paved the way for her gradual transformation from the professional siren to the woman, freed from the fetters that had bound her, and reendowed with her original virtues and the capacity for first love. Miracles of that kind are not worked nowadays, but she very nearly made this one credible.

Her reformed Camille, radiant with ecstatic happiness and love, was a fascinating creature. In the interview with old Duval, as she gradually comprehended the object of his visit, the very blood seemed to freeze in her veins. The extremity of dumb misery has never been more pathetically depicted. Restrained sobs seemed to tear her soul. But here she was a strong woman, not a weak one. The spirit which she embodied was one of heroically unselfish self-sacrifice for love's sweet sake, and she suggested the nobility of it, as well as the pain. In making her farewell from Armand, the heart-break in her hysterical laughter drew tears from eyes unused to the melting mood. Her impersonation, though very different from those of Clara Morris, Eleanora Duse, or Sarah Bernhardt, would stand the test of comparison with any one of them.

Her broken English, her lack of youthful charm and of such physical power as was exhibited by Adelaide Neilson, prevented her Juliet from achieving a great popular success. In some of the stormier passages she was barely intelligible. But artistically her impersonation was a delight; graceful, girlish (in everything but feature), poetic, ardent, and, at the last, entirely tragic. It was a fine, glowing, symmetrical interpretation of the text and spirit of the poet, and ex-

as "Portia," in
"The Merchant of Venice"

HELENA MODJESKA

as "Ophelia," in
"Hamlet"

as "Rosalind," in
"As You Like It"

quisitely refined and delicate. She met Romeo in the balcony scene with the simplicity of a love too noble and too innocent to affect concealment or fear misinterpretation. In gesture and attitude she was beautifully picturesque and eloquent. This Juliet had dignity without hauteur, affection without fussiness, and tenderness without sentimentality. In the potion scene she was often indistinct, but her frenzy was thrilling, and as she flung herself into a chair, after her vision of the charnel house, and sat there, statue-like, with blanched face and staring eyes, her simulation of horror was so vivid that elocutionary defects were forgotten. The whole performance was a delicious bit of romantic and poetic idealization.

Her Rosalind—in delicate imagination and poetic quality—was by all odds the best that it has ever been my fortune to see. Undoubtedly it failed to satisfy all the traditions of the English theater. It lacked a certain robustness of person and humor; the temperament, perhaps, was a trifle too mercurial for the quiet air of Arden; the type and tongue were not British. But it was arch, tender, elegant, intellectual, highly bred, and womanly, perfectly consistent, and executed with a technical perfection possible only to the complete artist. Her byplay in the

love scenes with Orlando was admirable, wholly appropriate, and spontaneous. There was the highest skill in the manner in which she betrayed to the audience only the palpitating emotions of the woman, while presenting to Orlando nothing but the waywardness of a fanciful boy. The double simulation was maintained with an inerrant surety. The only actress in modern times who might have equalled or excelled her in the character was Ellen Terry, and she, alas! was never permitted to assume it. It should be added that Modjeska, after a lapse of four years, was far more practised in the English speech than when she first played Juliet. Her foreign accent was, in some respects, a drawback, beyond question, but it also added a piquant zest to her sprightly utterances and, in so fanciful a piece, ruined no illusion.

Ellen Terry's Viola, in "Twelfth Night," we have seen, and Modjeska's, if not superior to it, was in all respects its equal, except, of course, in the pronunciation of the text. If the English woman had the more bewitching personality, Modjeska had the stronger creative and imaginative faculty. Her Rosalind, Viola, and her Portia (which came later) were all distinct personalities. Her Viola was presented amid most discouraging accessories of shabby scenery

and indifferent actors. But she brought illusion with her. Her simulation of cold, fatigue, and fear lent realism to a sea-coast which looked like anything else in the world. She was charming in her scenes with Orsino and Olivia, and rightfully played the duel scene with Sir Andrew in the spirit of high comedy instead of in the mood of rollicking burlesque in which most actresses of the part indulge. She acted as a timid but not spiritless woman, fearful of betraying her sex, would be likely to act in such circumstances. In technical skill Modjeska was surpassed by no actress of her day. In intellectual grasp, clearness of conception, distinction of manner, and skill in portraying the more delicate graces and traits of feminine nature, she excelled all but one or two of them.

XV

FANNY JANAUSCHEK. WHO ENDED IN TRIBULATIONS, AND MARY ANDERSON, WHO NEVER KNEW ANYTHING BUT POPULAR ADORATION

In the list of actresses of foreign association who became permanently associated with the New York stage, the name of Fanny Janauschek must not be forgotten. Her story was a sad one. After enjoying the sweets of fame and prosperity for many seasons, she fell upon evil days, through no fault of her own, and was doomed to taste the bitterness of popular neglect and poverty in her old age.

She was numbered among the greatest tragic actresses of Europe when she first visited America nearly fifty years ago, and was reputed to have the finest collection of presentation jewels—tributes of princes and potentates to her genius—in the possession of any stage artist. That may or may not have been true, but that she herself was an artistic jewel of great brilliancy and worth is beyond all peradventure. It was in characters of the heroic type that her artistic powers,

backed by superb physical qualifications, were displayed to their fullest advantage.

Her face was strong and expressive, her voice deep, full, and vibrant, her port majestic, and her vigor great. Of the technique of her art she was a perfect mistress, and her versatility was remarkable in all characters compounded of strong intellectual or emotional elements. Neither by temperament nor disposition was she fitted for the softer, seductive heroines of modern social comedy.

It was in great dramas that she shone, and when they disappeared from the stage her occupation, like Othello's, was gone. After holding a high seat among the queens of tragedy, she was, in her declining years, reduced to the necessity—as a mere means of livelihood—of appearing in the cheaper kinds of melodrama, which she often made extraordinarily effective by her still undimmed dramatic genius. No matter what the nature of her surroundings, she was a grand artist to the last, but the spectacle of her great abilities waisted on unworthy purpose was a melancholy one.

She made her first appearance on the stage of this country in the character of the mythical Brunhilde—in which she had long been famous in Europe—acting in German. Among her com-

patriots in New York and elsewhere she aroused the greatest enthusiasm, but in those days German audiences were smaller than they are now. So she set to work to study English, and in course of time became a full-fledged American actress, speaking English with a strong guttural accent, indeed, but with sufficient clearness and admirable emphasis.

Of all her parts, it was in Brunhilde, perhaps, that she found the widest scope for her powers. She endowed it with a majestic dignity and thoroughly heroic passion. Her imperious carriage, fiery declamation, and noble gesture contributed to a most imposing and picturesque effect. By sheer force of the finest romantic acting she realized the grandeur of the mythical personage. Her greatest triumph was won in the third act, in the scene with Siegfried where, in the hope of kindling in him a responsive passion, she recalls to his memory the day when he slew the dragon. She vitalized the situation by her intense enthusiasm. She seemed inspired, entranced; love glowed in every glance of her eyes, thrilled in each note of her voice. The change wrought in her by the laughing denial of Siegfried that he had ever loved her was wonderfully dramatic. She was transfigured by a wrath that appeared to blast her. The bloom of ripe woman-

hood seemed to wither, and she was left rigid and awful, with the brow and eye of a Medusa. It was an effect which only a great actress could create. And she was scarcely less impressive in her agony over her discovery of Gunther's treachery and her own disgrace, or in the stony calm of the despair with which she resolved to kill Siegfried and herself. Throughout the concluding acts she maintained the tragic emotion at a high pitch of tension with rare fertility of resource and really wonderful nervous and physical power.

As might naturally be expected in the case of an actress of her temperament, physical powers, and period, Janauschek in her Lady Macbeth was influenced by the traditions she found here, and especially by the example of Cushman. But she was far too great an actress to copy anybody servilely. Her interpretation, fully as strong if less savage than Cushman's, manifested the redeeming quality of feminine devotion. Her Lady Macbeth was murderous in her ambition and energetic in the prompting of her husband to murder, but she loved him passionately and, in her own tigress fashion, tenderly. She indicated this trait constantly, and emphasized it by a peculiarly fine stroke in the banquet scene, when, with a beautifully compassionate gesture, she

drew the head of the conscience-stricken Thane to her bosom, as if to shut out his vision, and held it there, while she turned upon the audience a face bloodless, drawn, and lined with despairing pity.

It was as if, at that moment, she first fully realized the depth and horror of the impending ruin, and her own share in the vaulting ambition that had made it inevitable for both. And in the sleep-walking scene she indicated the anguish of remorse as well as the intolerable strain of anxiety, exhaustion, and dread. If less striking than Cushman's in its exhibition of imperious, conscienceless, and indomitable will, her impersonation was not inferior in general firmness of execution, while it was a trifle less inhuman. It was a superb achievement.

She could sound the depths of pathos as well as she could scale the heights of passion. Her Mary Stuart was as affecting as it was queenly. But, for some reason not easily explained, her essays in the standard drama were less successful financially in New York than elsewhere, although they always excited enthusiasm in the theater and received the warmest critical appreciation.

In her selection of modern plays she was singularly unfortunate. She made remarkable

displays of varied abilities in wretched pieces whose absurdities not even her genius could mitigate. A concoction called "The Doctor of Lima" was a perfect miracle of ineptitude, but the pathos with which she filled her own part was supreme. While she was on the stage the audience was sympathetic and tearful; when she was "off" it was shaken with irreverent laughter. Once she enacted Jacques in a freakish feminine performance of "As You Like It," and—in spite of an appalling and ludicrous make-up—she stirred a bored audience to genuine enthusiasm by her fine reading of the part.

For many years she was most prosperous in "Chesney Wold," a melodrama founded on the "Bleak House" of Charles Dickens, in which as Lady Dedlock and the viperish French maid, Hortense, she furnished a notable example of the range and perfection of her technique. There was nothing, of course, in either part—both entirely conventional figures—which presented much interpretational difficulty to an actress of her intelligence and imagination. All was plain sailing for her. But the unerring certainty with which she embodied the two distinct types, the one cold, hard, impassive—all frozen hauteur—and the other agile, mercurial, waspish, coquettish, and vindictive, was a striking demonstration of

the executive efficiency conferred by long and diversified training, and by nothing else. In all their externals the two women were as far apart as the poles. Not for an instant was there the least confusion of identity.

The theatrical effect was brilliant and commanded (and deserved) the plaudits of the crowd, but actually made no exacting demands upon the sources of her dramatic inspiration. The nobler powers of the actress were revealed only in the natural pathos with which she humanized her Lady Dedlock when the latter, in suffering, became simple woman. It was by this double impersonation that Janauschek was most widely known in her riper years, and is now, perhaps, chiefly remembered, but it contained very little of her true genius.

Far happier was the lot of Mary Anderson, who, from the beginning to the end of her public career, was one of Fortune's darlings. Nature endowed her with rare beneficence. When, as a mere girl, she first entered upon the stage, she presented a figure of classic and virginal purity that was almost ideal. Her tall, lithe form was at once stately and graceful, the poise of her head was stag-like, and her face was radiant with health, innocence, and dignified beauty. It

was by the spell of her personal charms that she instantly made her way into the heart of the American public, and she retired to a happy and prosperous privacy when still at the height of her popularity, while that spell was yet potent. A finer type of young American womanhood could not easily be imagined. Like Lady Teazle, "bred wholly in the country," she was accepted at once as the representative American actress of her time, was fondly called "our Mary," and quickly became the object of a widespread affection and admiration that might, without much exaggeration, be called national. As a novice she was placed by her worshipers on a pinnacle from which she was never deposed. Her memory is still surrounded by a glamor which no one could wish to dispel. Her beauty, her spotless character, her graciousness, her intelligence, her refined manner, and her unquestionable dramatic instinct and ability contributed greatly to the honor and glory of the American stage while she adorned it; but for all that, she was never a great actress or a great artist. She does not belong in the same category with Charlotte Cushman, Janauschek, Modjeska, Clara Morris, or Edwin Booth.

In her early days, when she was first acclaimed as a great genius, she was manifestly a

tyro, hastily and imperfectly drilled, crude and spasmodic in action, but armed with fascination, courage, ambition, and a remarkable faculty of declamation. Her voice was always one of the most potent weapons in her artistic armory. It was a rich contralto, thoroughly feminine, but uncommonly full, deep, supple, and melodious. She knew how to avail herself of its finest tones, and consequently her delivery of blank verse was not always proof against the charge of monotony—but she often employed them to splendid purpose. As she gained experience she grew in power of emotional expression and was able to reinforce vocal richness with that inner throb of feeling that implies, if it does not necessarily denote, inspiration, but she never succeeded in identifying herself with any of the first-rate tragedy parts which she undertook. Now and again, where she could bring all her natural gifts into full display, she made some admirable points and was, for the moment, wonderfully picturesque, imposing, majestic, or appealing. But she exhibited—I am speaking now of tragedy or deeply emotional parts—little versatility in method or variety of resource.

She had certain formulas in which she was proficient, and she applied them to corresponding types of situation with a deadly and un-

MARY ANDERSON
(An Early Portrait)

FANNY JANAUSCHEK

© Napoleon Sarony.

MARY ANDERSON
as "Galatea," in "Pygmalion and Galatea"

modified reiteration. In the mechanism of her art she never advanced beyond a moderate proficiency. What she had learned to do she did well, but her executive ability was rigidly limited. It ceased to expand. In it she revealed neither invention nor ingenuity. She was always, solely and inevitably, Mary Anderson, and she reached her artistic boundaries when she had learned to express herself freely and fully. Thus she created no illusion of character, and was only fully successful when her part fitted her like a good glove. She had intelligence, a liberal measure of capacity, a sure comprehension of the finer feminine instincts and feelings, but she had not genius. In great parts, demanding imagination, passionate eloquence, or subtle discrimination, she was second-rate.

It is not necessary to dwell long upon her high tragic experiments, or even to mention all of them. Her Juliet was charming in the earlier acts, a little lacking, perhaps, in romantic coloring, but exquisite in its virginal faith and innocence. In the tragic climaxes it was impressive only in its picturesqueness and vocal power. It was a sympathetic but uninspired performance. In Sheil's Evadne, she was constantly beyond her depth in dealing with the complex emotions of the character, but her statuesque beauty, her

sense of pose, and her declamatory vigor enabled her to fill the theatrical situations with considerable effect. In the final act she was at her best. In her white robes she was an ideal figure of maidenly grace, dignity, and purity. With her rich voice she gave the fullest value to the sonorous lines relating to the deeds of her ancestors, and her challenge to her royal persecutor was superb. She was fairly well suited, too, in the part of the Countess in Sheridan Knowles's stilted romantic play, "Love," where she demonstrated the conflict between pride and passion with striking alternations of haughty reserve and impetuous passion, but without much subtlety in the transitions. In the scene where she compels her lover, after encouraging him to a declaration of his passion, to sign a marriage contract with another, she did some really good acting, and in her final surrender she played with moving sincerity. She did excellent work, too, in the "Fazio" of Dean Milman, a work of notable literary and tragic power. Her denunciation of her treacherous husband, her slow unveiling, and her horror and incredulity upon hearing the death sentence were all highly impressive but not electrical.

In the fourth act, where she pleads for her husband's life, offering to surrender him to her

rival, she comprehended the emotions perfectly and reached a fine pitch of tragic intensity. This was one of her best emotional achievements. For the part of Ion, in Talfourd's tragedy, she was imperfectly equipped, but in the earlier acts she enacted the youthful hero with a very successful concealment of her sex. In the second act, in the scene with Adrastus, she bore herself with an admirable admixture of tenderness, sadness, and resolution. In the later scenes she was scarcely successful in maintaining illusion, the emotions and manners of mature manhood being altogether beyond her capacity of simulation.

When she rashly ventured to challenge comparison with Charlotte Cushman in the character of Meg Merrilies, she not only offered a conclusive demonstration of her own artistic inferiority, but a curious lack of histrionic intuition in her failure to make legitimate use of her own physical qualifications. Witnessing her performance, one would naturally suppose that she had never read "Guy Mannering." Scott gives a minute description of his famous Gypsy Sybil. She was a masculine figure, six feet high, erect as a grenadier, with a voice like a man's. Mary Anderson, who had the stature, and the vigor, and the voice, chose to depict the formidable Meg as a withered, bent, and tottering old crone. The

assumption of old age—which is not difficult—was not badly done, but by this wilful or ignorant misrepresentation she robbed the character of its proper material dimensions, which she could have supplied, as well as its spiritual significance, which she could not. Dramatic genius could never so flagrantly abuse an opportunity. What would not Cushman have given for those additional inches!

In the parts which really suited her—whose component elements were those of her own temperament and personality—Mary Anderson was wholly delightful. Her Galatea in W. S. Gilbert's admirable "Pygmalion and Galatea" was a charming performance, which reflected the spirit of the author in its various moods of humor, sarcasm, and pathos with delicate and artistic fidelity. As the statue she was so lovely an example of pure classic grace that the infatuation of Pygmalion was no cause for surprize. Her awakening to life was an exceedingly delicate and imaginative piece of pantomime. The naïveté of her innocence was perfect, pure unsophisticated curiosity and bepuzzlement, irresistibly true and piquant, without the slightest trace of artifice. Her timid, questioning, reflective, unsuspicious air, and her grave, gentle, tuneful voice, were all beautifully appropriate.

Her treatment of the episode of the wounded fawn was exceedingly clever and veracious, full of tenderness and pity, and delightfully natural in its childlike shrinking from the notion of annihilating death. The enbodiment was a most felicitous combination of the human, the poetic, and the idealistic. It could have been furnished only by a clever, refined, and good woman. Her Parthenia, in "Ingomar," was a performance of the same type, marked by the same methods. It was an older Galatea, with a little more sophistication, a little more of the purely human and feminine, but the same spell of virginal freshness and innocence. A third impersonation which will always be cherished in the memories of those who saw it was her Perdita, in "The Winter's Tale," instinct with the spirit of the springtime, buoyant with the joy of life, manifesting its happiness in a dance which was the very poetry of motion. In these three parts Mary Anderson found herself, in more senses than one, and they were the masterpieces of her theatrical gallery.

XVI

LAWRENCE BARRETT, JOHN McCULLOUGH, EDGAR L. DAVENPORT, JOSEPH JEFFERSON, AND OTHERS

John McCullough was inferior to Barrett in character, in intellect, in subtlety, in ambition, and in range, but he was a good actor, within restricted limits, of heroic parts, for which nature had bestowed upon him the physical qualities in which Barrett was deficient. He was a man of noble presence, of powerful build, with bold Roman features and a voice that had in it the ring of the trumpet. A disciple of Forrest, he emulated the methods of his exemplar with considerable success, and in stormy bursts of passion he exhibited vast power. Moreover, he could assume a lofty dignity in which Forrest was lacking, and had a notable mastery of virile pathos. He excelled in broad strokes, in the vivid contrasts between raging passion, portentous calm, and the inner convulsions caused by repressed emotions. But he was not an intellectual, imaginative, or analytical performer. In great parts he was only second-rate. In Lear, for instance, he

could stir his hearers to enthusiasm by the magnificent outbursts of passion which seemed to shake the theater, and in the concluding scenes he depicted the pitiful state of the forlorn old king with simple and genuine pathos, but his impersonation as a whole, though theatrically effective, had neither grandeur nor subtlety. It was not Lear.

His Othello was an imposing and martial figure, with authority in voice and mien and all the external indications of the "frank and noble nature" with which Iago credited him. And his "waked wrath" was terrible. This was the best of his Shakespearean embodiments, and in respect of adequate passion was superior to that of any other contemporary English-speaking actor. But it was only in storm and stress that it was remarkable. In detail it was crude, unimaginative, unfinished, a bold free-hand sketch rather than a completed study. In his Macbeth, again, it was the physical prowess that was the dominant feature. His Richard III, in the Cibber version, was a bit of lurid melodrama. There was much merit in his Coriolanus, a part for which he had every physical qualification, but it was an unequal performance, often marred by an exaggeration in which passion became rant, and sarcasm vituperation. But he

was a striking picture of patrician pride, courage, and contempt when he faced the mob excited against him by the Tribunes, and his "I banish you!" was delivered with superb scorn.

His Virginius, in Knowles's tragedy, was his most notable achievement. In this he approached greatness very closely. The part, compounded of powerful but simple emotions, lay completely within the compass of his abilities, and called all the best of them into requisition. Soldierly dignity, grave humor, paternal tenderness, manly rage, and the frantic despair of a strong man were denoted by him with masterly simplicity and truth. His enactment of the Forum scene was heroic in its proportions. In the sacrifice of his daughter, the tenderness of the fond father and the spirit of the ancient Roman were most skilfully blended, and in the closing scene of madness and despair he manifested more subtlety than was common with him. In this part he was *facile princeps* among his contemporaries, and there is no American actor now who could equal him in it. He excelled also in some passages of John Howard Payne's tragedy of Brutus. Of Richelieu he comprehended little but the melodrama. In such parts as Spartacus, Jack Cade, and Metamora he delighted the galleries with his vocal and bodily vigor; but mere *brutum*

LAWRENCE BARRETT
as "Hamlet"

JOHN MCCULLOUGH
as "Virginius"

LAWRENCE BARRETT
as "Lanciotto," in "Francesca da Rimini"

fulmen is not acting. He stood shoulder high above most of his associates, but he was a giant only when among pigmies.

Of Edgar L. Davenport some mention has been made already. His day had passed when the sun of McCullough was at its meridian. He had not the personal preeminence or rugged strength of the younger man, but he, too, possessed fine physical attributes and he was a more intellectual and more accomplished actor. If he had not genius, he had keen and comprehensive histrionic intelligence, and his large experience in almost every variety of drama had made him singularly proficient in executive mechanism. His adaptability was remarkable. His Hamlet, second only to Booth's, was an exceedingly able performance, princely, thoughtful, tender, gravely humorous, sympathetic, and, in the crises, finely passionate. The text he read with scholarly and eloquent discrimination. His Othello revealed a much larger insight than McCullough's and was stronger in the elemental passions than Booth's. Of the mystery of Macbeth he exhibited a firm psychological grasp. His Lear I never saw; but once, when by a happy chance he supported Booth in that character, he proved an incomparable Edgar.

Once, for his benefit, he played Hamlet and

William in "Black Eyed Susan," enacting the gallant tar in the most approved (theatrical) nautical style and dancing a horn-pipe with consummate skill and agility. His Bill Sykes was one of the most terrific exhibitions of savage blackguardism ever witnessed on the stage, while only Booth could excel him in the craft and finesse of Richelieu. His Sir Giles Overreach was generally admitted to be the best upon the stage. In the final act it reached a pitch of passion that was maniacal. In "Julius Cæsar" he was a splendidly dignified and magnanimous Brutus. He was a sterling actor and artist who, in these later days, would be considered a paragon, but it was his ill-fortune to be somewhat overshadowed, the fates were not always propitious to him, and he never won the full recognition that he deserved.

In the period of which I have been writing Joseph Jefferson was already one of the most prominent luminaries in the theatrical firmament. For nearly half a century he basked in the sunshine of prosperity. No comedian, perhaps, has ever been the object of so much critical praise or popular affection. His memory is still fresh and fragrant, while his public triumphs and his private life and character have been the subject of innumerable publications. I can add

nothing to the records of his career, and a summary of them would be wholly superfluous and tiresome. Only one question concerning him remains to be decided, and that relates to the position to be assigned to him in the ranks of his profession. Everybody knows that he reflected honor upon it, that his life was an illustrious example of purity and honor, that he was a delightful gentleman, humorous, gentle, genial, refined, generous, and artistic, and that he was in many ways a master-workman in his craft. All these things are generally admitted. I would not disturb a leaf of the laurels deposited upon his monument. But—there is nearly always a but—I do not believe that he is, in the final estimate, entitled to a place among the really great actors of history.

He had not the gift of impersonation, as is proved by the fact that he produced but one masterpiece, his Rip Van Winkle, which was exquisite. I will subscribe readily to all the critical appreciations that have been heaped upon that achievement. As a realization of an ideal—an ideal, it must be remembered, which in itself was radically false in nature, though that hard fact has nothing to do with the execution of it—his portrayal was unsurpassable in delicacy of drawing, in glamor of romantic coloring, in irre-

pressible light-heartedness, in tenderness, quaint humor, and wistful pathos. It was, on the surface, so absolutely true and vital, so irresistibly human, that, no matter how often it was seen, it never palled. And yet it was only in a limited sense a creation. In manner, as in sentiment, it was primarily and largely an expression of the actor's personal individuality. This Rip was not the drunkard of Irving, who was of infinitely commoner clay. The actor divested the part of its coarser element—the play itself was a clumsy bit of patchwork—and altered it to fit his own moods and instincts and to bring it well within the radius of his own means of dramatic expression.

Virtually he acted it as he imagined he himself would have behaved if he had been in the situation ascribed to Rip. Having outlined this conception he reinforced and embroidered it with every device of his theatrical art, until it attained the minute finish of a picture by Meissonier or Holman Hunt. It is not in this way that the great imaginative artist works, for he knows that the first requirement of interpretative creation is elimination of self.

That Jefferson pursued this method is sufficiently proved by the fact that his personality, or that of Rip, predominated in all his other sub-

sequent impersonations. In parts so diverse as Caleb Plummer, Pangloss, and Bob Acres, the basic individualities were identical. This does not mean that they were all alike in "business" or action, but that they were, one and all, endowed with many identical characteristics peculiar to the actor. They were all unmistakably the same man in different guises. They differed in dress, in age, in behavior, very little if at all in personality. In innumerable little tricks of manner, in vocal inflections and intonations, in the familiar little chuckle and gasp, in facial play, in gesture, each was Joseph Jefferson.

A similar criticism would apply, with equal truth, of course, to many players of high artistic repute. But that is not the point. The great majority of stage performers habitually enact themselves instead of the fictitious character, and often gain much credit in so doing. Sometimes when the personality and temperament of the actor coincide, or closely harmonize, with those of the assumed character, the impersonation may be artistically satisfactory, even when the actor reveals no creative power at all. This frequently happens nowadays, when "stars" are provided with tailor-made parts to show them off to the best advantage. It is even possible for an actor with a notable personality but very little

creative power to play a great character greatly, as in the case, for instance, of McCullough and Virginius. But the true creative power—the possession of which, I hold, is the one infallible test of histrionic greatness—is only manifested when an actor can present a series of great or widely diverse characters without the obvious assertion of his individual self in any of them. Booth demonstrated this faculty in his Hamlet, Richelieu, and Bertuccio; Salvini in Othello, Conrad, and Saul; and other examples could easily be cited. It does not follow that all actors with a creative faculty must necessarily be great. Davenport was not great, but he was creative. He could play Sir Giles Overreach or Bill Sykes. E. A. Sothern was not great, but he created Lord Dundreary, and Fitzaltamont in "The Crushed Tragedian." The quality of the creative power and of the greatness of the actor can only be estimated by the imaginative or emotional quality of the part and the effect of its interpretation.

Now none of the parts in which Jefferson delighted his audiences could by any stretch of the imagination be called great. None of them sounded the heights or depths of emotion, lofty flights of imagination or passion, or demanded the exhibition of uncommon intellectual, moral, or dramatic power. They all lay within the

limits of the middle register. All of them were played, and often very well played, by actors of no extraordinary capacity. There were many who preferred the Caleb Plummer of John E. Owens—there was certainly more of Dickens in it—and the Acres of George Giddens, to Jefferson's presentment of those characters. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that Jefferson never really played Acres at all. He did not in the least resemble the unsophisticated British country squire, vainly aping fashionable manners, whom Sheridan sketched. He was delectable, infinitely amusing, utterly unreal—Joseph Jefferson in delicious masquerade. Wherein then—if he was not a creator and could not or did not play great parts, and, therefore, was not, in the true sense, a great actor—is to be found the secret of Jefferson's popularity and fame? The answer is easy. In his consummate artistry and his personal fascination. Whether or not he was conscious of the comparatively narrow boundaries of his dramatic powers does not much matter.

It is sufficient to know that he made no serious effort to cross them. He was content, throughout the greater part of his long and active life, to play the characters which, in a very special sense, he had made peculiarly his own. In

effecting these personifications he employed a technical skill which was as nearly perfect as anything in this imperfect world can be. His most intricate and delicate mechanism worked with flawless accuracy, precision, and smoothness. Everything that he said or did upon the stage appeared to proceed from the impulse of the moment, to be entirely spontaneous. It cost him long years of hard and varied stage work, in his youth, to acquire this mechanical proficiency, but the investment of time and labor brought him an exceedingly rich reward. He earned it and deserved it, but that is no reason why he should be accredited with a genius he did not possess.

In scribbling these desultory and discursive reminiscences I have tried only to touch upon those outstanding features in a vast mass of theatrical matter which may be of some present significance and interest. There has been no attempt at a complete record. The great majority of the plays between 1874 and 1884 were of no better quality than those of to-day—were not, perhaps, quite so good. They have long sunk into well-merited oblivion and may be permitted to remain there undisturbed. And I have confined myself to plays given in English, making no mention of Sarah Bernhardt, Ristori, or Rossi,

who belong to this period. They could scarcely be claimed for the American stage, and, in any case, they could not be properly treated in any amount of space that could now be spared for them. Ristori, after some brilliant triumphs in her native tongue—she was a magnificent artist—did, indeed, make some unfortunate essays in English, but with disastrous consequences.

Of the Sarah Bernhardt of thirty-five years ago this much may be said, that she was a much greater artist then than she is to-day. I do not think that many of the leading English-speaking dramatic personalities have been overlooked, but there are some secondary figures which deserve a line or two of mention. W. J. Florence was a comedian of very nearly first-rate ability and genuine creative power. His Bardwell Slote, his Bob Brierly, and his Sir Lucius O'Trigger may be quoted as samples of his versatility. The lovely Adelaide Neilson won triumph as Amy Robsart, and was successful as Beatrice in "Much Ado." Rosina Vokes, in farcical comedy, was one of the cleverest and most piquant actresses who ever adorned the stage. She had the most infectious laugh ever heard in a theater and a merry devil lodged in her eye. John S. Clarke was a most unctuous and mirth-provoking, though excessively mannered comedian. Daniel E. Band-

mann, a brilliant but uneven actor of romantic parts, attracted attention and excited controversy with his Hamlet, Shylock, and Narcisse. Mrs. John Drew, one of the most sterling comedians of her time, was an ideal Mrs. Malaprop. Geneviève Ward, a forcible, intellectual, but somewhat frigid actress, gave a brilliant performance of the adventuress in "Forget Me Not," and won critical commendation in "Jane Shore" and "Macbeth." Charles Wyndham, in his prime, played in light comedy with unflagging spirit and wonderful agility. And W. S. Gilbert came over to produce "Pinafore," "The Pirates of Penzance," and "Patience," and to illustrate his notions of stage management. Few men have been so expert in this art. He could not only tell a performer what to do, but show him how to do it. And he persisted until he had his way. A well-known comedian, still living, rebelled against his tuition. "I have been acting," he said sarcastically, "for twenty years, and I should think that by this time I ought to know my business." "So should I," said Gilbert. There was a quarrel among the chorus girls and one of them began to cry. "What's the matter, my dear?" said Mr. Gilbert, paternally. Pointing to her neighbor, the girl replied, "She says that I am no better than I ought to be!" "Never mind," said Gilbert; "you are, aren't you?"

XVII

IRVING AND TERRY

It was in October, 1883, that Henry Irving, the undisputed leader of the English-speaking stage for many years, began his first and most memorable engagement on the New York stage. He paid us several later visits, in the course of which he made many notable productions, but none quite so good as those with which he first surprised and delighted the town. Even he could not make much headway against the progressive degeneration that had set in upon the stage, although he checked it for a time. His famous company—which at its best was not the equal of that which had in still earlier years supported Phelps at Sadler's Wells—was gradually weakened by death and other causes, and the best available new material was inferior to the old. The mainsprings of his own artistic energies relaxed slowly under the strain which he imposed upon them, but in 1883 he was in the meridian of his powers and his fame, and for a season he revived the

ancient glories of the stage and enriched them with a new luster.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the value of his managerial services to the public and the theater. He reawakened popular interest in the legitimate drama, showed managers once more how Shakespeare could be made to pay, demonstrated by financial success the efficiency of the artistic theater as a commercial enterprise and the superiority of the stock over the star system, and gave a permanent uplift to the social status of the actor. He did for the poetic and romantic drama what Wallack's at its best did for literary artificial comedy. It is true that the fabric he had reared began to crumble before his death—when he was assailed by ill-health and a series of staggering misfortunes—and disappeared after it, but the effects of his example and of the high standards which he reestablished are still perceptible, and he left possible successors and imitators, not only in his son, who seems to have inherited a considerable measure of his abilities, but in a group of rising young actors, chiefly reared in the school of F. R. Benson, who are trying to follow in his footsteps.

It would be as presumptuous as it would be futile to attempt, within the prescribed limits of a paper of this kind, anything like a full synop-

sis of his career, or a minute analysis of his intellectual and histrionic capacities. The main facts in his life are familiar to everybody interested in modern theatrical affairs, and the minor details are easily accessible in published biographies. To rehearse them here would be tedious. I shall confine myself, therefore, to a few general observations upon his work and his personal and artistic characteristics when in his prime. He was, in the exact sense of the word, extraordinary, as man, actor, and manager. His intellect was keen, his will indomitable, his ambition insatiate, his industry great, his energy almost indefatigable. Some authoritative critics credited him with great dramatic genius, others maintained that he had none. The truth, as it is apt to do, lies between the extremes. Certainly, I should say, he could not rightfully be included in the category of such great actors as Salvini, Edwin Booth, Edmund Kean, Macready, and Phelps, but in many diverse characters he had moments when he came very near to greatness, if he did not attain it. He could no more keep his personal individuality out of his characters than Joseph Jefferson could, or Mr. Dick exclude King Charles's head from his memorial, but he could supplement it with traits and passions entirely foreign to it, yet appropriate to the fictitious

part, in a manner that clearly proved his inventiveness, his imagination, and, in a certain degree, his versatility.

He sometimes furnished more of Irving than of the assumed character, but he was never Irving in masquerade and nobody else. Take him as a whole, sum him up in his threefold capacity as man, actor, and manager, and his title to the possessorship of that special and often undefinable natural gift which is called genius could scarcely be gainsaid. Beyond all question he had the infinite capacity for taking pains. There was not a trick in his trade which he did not know and which he did not strive to master. When I first saw him act in London, more than fifty years ago, in a number of small parts, there was nothing particularly noticeable about him except a certain eccentric jerkiness in speech and action. But he was thorough. I remember the famished haste with which he gulped down bread as Jeremy Diddler. He was stiff, awkward, laborious, but decisive. His mechanism was not yet as promptly responsive to his directing intelligence as it became afterward.

During the arduous years of his apprenticeship his progress was slow, but it was steady. It was not until he at last found his opportunity in "Hunted Down" and "The Two Roses" that he

revealed the power of subtle intellectual conception that lay behind his eccentric and hitherto inflexible manner. When he first recited the "Eugene Aram" of Tom Hood, his minute and vivid portrayal of a remorseful criminal, driven to frenzy by the pangs of a fearful conscience, was a revelation to his warmest friends and admirers. He had found his true line. From Aram he proceeded to Mathias in "The Bells," which led him speedily to fame and fortune.

A discussion of the question whether there was real genius in his acting, and if so, how much, would not be very profitable now. The critical camp, as has been said, is divided upon it. Personally, I do not think that he ever manifested a spark of the divine fire, certainly not in any of the great tragic characters that he attempted. Genius on the stage seldom takes long to ripen. He did not leap, at a bound, from obscurity to fame, as did Garrick, Talma, Edmund Kean, Salvini, and others. He worked his way slowly up from the bottom to the top, not by any abnormal power, but by virtue of his ambitious spirit, his rare intelligence, his artistic instinct, and his splendid, self-reliant courage. The interpretation of passions in their more heroic or exalted forms was a task beyond his strength. Over the ordinary emotions he had more than a sufficient con-

trol, but he was primarily an intellectual rather than emotional actor. He could charm by his delicacy, dazzle by his brilliancy, and thrill by his intensity, but he could not overwhelm. He could be finely dignified and tender, as in Charles I; regal, subtle, and pathetic, as in Lear, but not grand or awful; he could be beautifully paternal, as in "The Vicar of Wakefield," but he could not play the romantic lover. His Romeo was a dismal failure. It was in intellectual and eccentric characters, especially those in which there was a vein of sardonic humor or a taint of evil, that he was most successful, such as Mathias, Louis XI, Iago, Malvolio, Richelieu, Shylock, or Benedick.

It was as Mathias in "The Bells," the part in which he first won celebrity, that he made his début in this country, and his performance excited great enthusiasm and warm controversy. As he played it then it was, in its cleverness of conception, consistency, and progressive development of design, a masterpiece. The character, of course, is not a great one. It is a morbid but exceedingly effective theatrical study of a crafty, resolute, and unsuspected murderer driven to despair and death by the spiritual anguish caused by hallucinations provoked by conscience. Psychologically, it is not scientific or important.

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ELLEN TERRY
as "Lady Macbeth"

HENRY IRVING
as "Hamlet"

Expert criminologists know that murderers of that stamp do not suffer or die in that way. But the design of the dramatist was to exhibit in theatrical pantomime the unavailing struggle of an unyielding will to defy the throes of an inappeasable remorse, and Irving comprehended it perfectly and illustrated it with such a wealth of cunning, intellectual executive resource, such infinite variation of facial play, expressive pose, gesture, and vocal inflection, that it became fascinating, harrowing, and plausible.

In later years the impersonation became somewhat feebler and overwrought, and so conveyed an impression of strain and artificiality. Actually it was always the result of artful, deliberate, theatrical calculation, a composition designed for effect, not for analysis, but in its earlier days it was performed with a rapidity, smoothness, and nervous force that gave it the semblance of spontaneous inspiration, especially when the actor was new to his audience and even his mannerisms assumed the aspect of invention. Really the impersonation revealed few of the finer qualities of the actor, but it was a wonderful demonstration of theatrical intelligence and finished executive skill. And these again were the conspicuous features of his remarkable embodiment of Louis XI. This, too, was eminently the-

atrical, in some places it approached the grotesque, but it was so nicely proportioned, so consistent in its extravagances, and so elaborately wrought—was such an admirable blend of senile ferocity, suspicion, lust, cruelty, superstition, treachery, and abject cowardice—that it passed for human. It was a marvel of stage technique, especially in the encounter with Nemours and in the death scene. But it was not a great performance, because it was untrue, dealt only with the baser emotions, and called for no great effort of histrionic imagination. Both these characters lay easily within the range of the actor's executive powers.

In "Charles I."—a most unhistorical romance—Irving struck a higher note and presented another striking proof of his sense of characterization. He looked the unhappy king as if he had just stepped out of the frame of a Vandyke portrait, and his carriage was that of easy, habitual, and unconscious authority. His subdued, thoughtful, dignified manner was in striking contrast with the nervous excitability of Mathias and Louis, and proved the completeness of his artistic self-control. The part was no hard test of his ability, but he made some uncommonly fine strokes in his majestic treatment of Cromwell—who is introduced simply as a "server" to the

king—and in the pathetic rebuke of the traitor Moray, which he uttered with a simplicity totally free from his usual elocutionary peculiarities. But it was in "The Merchant of Venice" that he won his greatest triumph as an actor-manager. No such performance of that comedy has been given in this city, before or since.* His later representations of it were less perfect because he no longer had the same cast. The production in 1883 was probably—taking it all in all—the finest Shakespearean revival he ever made. It was in every way, pictorially and dramatically, worthy of the text, and it is of mighty few Shakespearean revivals that so much can be truthfully declared. As a spectacle it charmed by the artistic beauty of its grouping and coloring, the picturesqueness and genuine realism of its street scenes, the fine tone and finish of its interiors, and the poetic atmosphere surrounding the garden at Belmont. The whole panorama was the product of scholarly, liberal, imaginative, and tasteful direction. And the acting, from first to last, was of the same high quality as the setting.

The Shylock of Irving was not far behind Booth's. Inferior to it in oratory and passion, it was equal to it in intellectual force and superior to it in romantic fancy. It held the interest

* This holds good up to the present time, June, 1916.

of the spectators in the firmest grip. The chief defect in it was a certain inconsistency. In the opening acts it was all venom, hatred, and supple craft, but in the trial scene—after Portia's verdict—it assumed an air of noble patriarchal sufferance under savage and unjust persecution. The final exit—as the broken old Jew, with haggard face, blank, staring eyes, and tottering steps, groped his way from the court room supporting himself with outstretched arms against the wall —was a wonderful picture of stunned misery.

And with what a group of sterling players was this Shylock surrounded! First and foremost, of course, was the Portia of Ellen Terry, then in the fullest bloom of feminine witchery. This was the fairest and most enchanting impersonation, perhaps, of her Shakespearean women. She was dazzling and dangerous as the wilful and brilliant Beatrice, a lovely and pitiful Ophelia, a tender and poetic Viola; but with the part of Portia she seemed to identify herself completely, illustrating its every mood with an irresistible grace and most spontaneous ease. Charles Reade defined the actress very happily when he said that "grace pervades the hussy." Accomplished actress as she was, she owed much of her success to the natural beauty of her movements. Of other actors in this memorable cast, Wenman was

HENRY IRVING
as "Shylock"

ELLEN TERRY
as "Portia"

"THE MERCHANT OF VENICE"

an admirable Antonio, poor William Terriss a most gallant Bassanio, old Howe a perfect Duke, the veteran Tom Meade an ideal Prince of Morocco, S. Johnson an excellent Launcelot Gobbo, and Miss Payne a most attractive Nerissa. There was no weak spot anywhere.

In the effective melodrama, "The Lyons Mail," Irving's best acting was done in the part of the falsely accused Lesurques. His portrayal of amazed, indignant, and confounded innocence charged with a crime which it can not refute was extraordinarily clever and subtle, but he gained more applause for his murderous and drunken ruffian Dubosc, a part which could easily have been played much more effectively by a far less capable actor, with better physical advantages. It was a clever bit of theatrical trickery, but there was nothing wonderful or very impressive about it, although it pleased the galleries greatly. Nor did he add greatly to his laurels by his Doricourt in "The Belle's Stratagem," in which his worst mannerisms were painfully apparent. But, as might be expected, he played the mad scene very cleverly. The last production of this first engagement was "Hamlet," which in respect of pictorial beauty, general excellence of stage management, and thorough competency of the supporting cast, was the equal of "The Mer-

chant of Venice." But unfortunately there was one weak spot in it, and that was the Prince. In that part—more aggressively, perhaps, than in any other of the great tragic characters that he played here in after years—were the disabilities of Irving to cope with great emotional poetic conceptions made manifest. I do not propose to dwell upon them now.

Of course, there was much that was admirable in his impersonation, but these excellences were exhibited almost exclusively in the less emotional passages. In the crises it was eccentric, extravagant, tricky, and melodramatic. Its successes only helped to make its failures more exasperating. Its reception in this country was cool. In London it found much more general acceptance. There he had not to contend with Edwin Booth. It is pleasant to be able to close this paper with a reference to one of his artistic triumphs. His "Twelfth Night," which he presented in November, 1884, was an almost ideal representation. In Malvolio he found a part admirably adapted to his intelligence, his temperament, his methods, and to his peculiar vein of grave or sardonic humor. His steward was no buffoon. He conceived and played him in the mood of a Don Quixote, making him an object of pity rather than laughter, although he

was infinitely amusing. His long, lank, angular figure, his grave, ascetic face, his very manner of speech, enabled him to suggest the Quixotic type. (He did, it will be remembered, embody the Knight of La Mancha in later years.) He appeared as a melancholy Hidalgo, distraught by an egotism which rendered him unconscious of his potential servitude while greatly intensifying his susceptibilty to the slights of his domestic associates.

At bottom he was a proud and sensitive, if also very silly and ridiculous, gentleman. The victim of a cruel practical joke, a butt for coarse merriment, the perfect sincerity of his feelings and his self-deception made his fate tragic. Unquestionably Irving embodied the true Shakespearean fancy, and he illustrated it with innumerable touches of rarely subtle humor and genuine pathos. It was a notable creation, but imperfectly comprehended by the general public, which found more delight in the liquorish Sir Toby of Wenman, one of the most unctuous bits of robust low comedy ever seen upon the stage, the exquisite Viola of Ellen Terry, the sparkling Maria of Miss Payne, and the excellent Sir Andrew of Norman Forbes. The whole representation was a managerial achievement of the highest merit, and the memory of it is still fragrant.

XVIII

TOMMASO SALVINI AND LESTER WALLACK

It was in October, 1885, that the late Tommaso Salvini, then in his artistic and physical prime, once more essayed the character of King Lear before an American audience, thus challenging comparison with Edwin Booth and Edwin Forrest. He played it under the most adverse conditions, amid the vast spaces of the Metropolitan Opera House, in an unsatisfactory Italian version of the tragedy, with an English-speaking company of inferior quality, whose professed support was a perpetual handicap. Yet his triumph over all these difficulties was absolute. From beginning to end he held in thrall an audience which completely filled the great house and gave vent to its emotions in frequent outbursts of rapturous applause, such as only acting of the supremest kind can evoke in a theater. The greatest demonstration of all, perhaps, occurred at the end of the death scene, at the end of the performance. Late as was the hour, the spectators lingered to call the actor before the curtain again and again, as if unwilling to leave

the scene of their enchantment. No more remarkable spontaneous tribute was ever given to any achievement of histrionic genius. But the effort itself was damned with faint and grudging praise by most of the contemporaneous critics. They acknowledged the power of it, but pronounced it un-Shakespearean, untraditional, unsympathetic, romantic, and melodramatic rather than tragic. Far be it from me to impugn the sincerity of their verdict. Their judgment, not their honesty, failed them. What they lacked was catholicity of taste and comprehension. They were more or less justified by the narrow traditional standards by which they permitted themselves to be bound. It is perfectly true that the Lear of Salvini could never entirely satisfy those who hold that Shakespeare can not be understood or interpreted except by an actor of Anglo-Saxon lineage. It was not primarily or exclusively British. That is not a fatal objection in the eyes of those who realize that human emotions are alike everywhere, but may vary infinitely in their modes of expression.

What was Shakespeare's Lear? He was a semi-barbaric King, imperious, rugged, picturesque, headstrong, and a mighty warrior, who wielded a good, biting falchion. Burdened, but not broken, by age, he was driven mad by the

indignities heaped upon him by the cruel and faithless daughters, trusting in whom he had abdicated. At the last he was a foolish, fond old man, the most pathetic and one of the most tragic and poetic figures in all drama. All of this Salvini was. His impersonation differed at almost every point from those of Phelps, of Forrest, or of Edwin Booth, but was inferior to none of them in subtlety and consistency of conception, imaginative detail, pathos, or finished execution, while it exceeded them all in its facile dominance of tragic passion. In port he was majestic, in fury terrible, in his desolation unutterably pitiful. It would be difficult to imagine anything more realistic than the shifting moods of his madness. In a word he vitalized an ideal which might have been, even if it was not, that of Lear's creator—one that Shakespeare certainly would never have disowned. Italian it was, beyond all question, but it was also human and superb. As for the charge that it was romantic melodrama, that need not be denied. It originated in a confusion of terms. Melodrama is but tragedy of a baser sort, and all poetic tragedy is romantic melodrama raised to its highest degree. The greater includes the less. The romantic and picturesque qualities of Salvini's Lear contributed greatly to its fascination.

For the carping criticism that was directed against the Coriolanus of Salvini there was much less excuse on the score of orthodoxy. He played this character, for the first time in his life, in November, 1885, and his experiment naturally excited lively interest among the most intelligent class of playgoers. He confronted an audience as large and as cultivated as any that has ever been assembled within the walls of a New York theater, and he conquered it completely. He might have said, in the words of the assumed character, "Alone I did it," for never did man act amid more discouraging conditions. The scenery was a collection of odds and ends, the support was infamous, and he spoke in a language a majority of his hearers could not understand. On the other hand, it is obvious that the part of Coriolanus was one with which he had much closer natural affinity than that of Lear. He had fewer racial and textual difficulties to deal with, and was, of course, fully conversant with the legendary history upon which the play was founded. If he could not master the letter, he could at any rate grasp the spirit of the Shakespearean creation, even through the paraphrases of an uninspired translation. There is doubtless some warrant for the oft-repeated assertion that Shakespeare conceived all his for-

eigners in terms of the Anglo-Saxon, but to intimate that, by reason of his nationality, Salvini, a histronic genius of the first order, was unable to comprehend the nature of an ancient Roman was as illogical and presumptuous as it was parochial.

The simple truth is that his performance was nothing short of extraordinary in its impressiveness, picturesqueness, and vitality. It is tolerably safe to say that, so far as mere grandeur of physical proportions are concerned, the old Roman patrician never before had so magnificent a representative. In face and figure he was an ideal soldier of the classic heroic mold. Macready, and other leaders of the English-speaking stage, conceived Coriolanus as an aristocrat of the Saxon type with the sluggish insular pulse. In Salvini's person, he glowed with the ardent temperament of the Latin races. To him the frigid immobility, which in the English theater is commonly regarded as the one and indispensable symbol of contemptuous pride and defiance, would have been impossible. Never hysterical or restless, he signified each passing emotion by the freest play of gesture and facial expression, but every movement and attitude emphasized the inherent self-reliant, intolerant, and imperious nature of the man. In his volcanic explosions

of passion and his moments of simple pathos, he was ever mindful of his dignity. Before everything else, he was the invincible warrior. It was evident that his contempt for the mob sprang chiefly not from pride of rank, but scorn of their cowardice and sense of his own moral and physical superiority. His unwillingness to beg favors of them was because of his honest disgust at the idea of boasting of a courage which in his eyes was no virtue at all, but the natural inheritance of every proper man. He rushed into the rabble and dispersed it, like a veritable eagle fluttering the dove-cotes, and shook with laughter at the angry demonstrations which alarmed his friends.

The performance was so full of bold strokes and delicate beauties that only a detached review could do it full justice. A few of the most striking features may be mentioned. One wonderful effect was created in the scene when his wife, mother and friends implored him to yield to the demands of the plebs. The subtlety and veracity of his suggestion of the suppressed torture of a haughty spirit schooling itself to accept proffered humiliation constituted an amazing exhibition of emotional imagination and executive artistry, while the outburst of fury which preceded his final submission was one of the most startling

that even he had ever enacted. The ensuing scene in the forum was superb from start to finish, and the culmination of it, where, his pent-up wrath bursting all the bonds of patience, he thundered out his defiance, towering among the crowd like a giant among the pigmies, created an enthusiasm among the spectators akin to that which used to follow his appalling assault upon Iago, or his marvelous death scene in "La Morte Civile."

In wonderful contrast with this was the virile but moving pathos of his farewell to his assembled family after the decree of banishment pronounced against him, and the fine dignity, with its undertone of personal anguish, with which he accepted the greetings of the Volscian general, Aufidius. Another extraordinary, but altogether different manifestation of internal emotion, with an effect out of all proportion to the apparent simplicity of the means employed, was afforded during his reception of the Roman suppliants in the Volscian camp, culminating in another tremendous explosion of wrath against Aufidius. The whole impersonation was a masterpiece, worthy of a conspicuous place in any list of Salvini's creations, which collectively constitute the most wonderful histrionic achievement of modern times.

After "Coriolanus," which was less successful with the general public than it might have been if it had been treated with greater fairness, cordiality, and discernment in the daily press, Salvini appeared many times as Othello, Samson, Niger, and Conrad, but only undertook one new character, the Ghost in "Hamlet." That was during his brief engagement in 1886 with Edwin Booth. The joint appearance of two such famous players was, of course, a remarkable theatrical event. It occurred in the Academy of Music, and attracted, perhaps, the largest and most distinguished audiences that ever assembled within the walls of that famous old house. They acted together first in "Othello," and expectation was on tiptoe to see the greatest of Iagos and the greatest of Moors in artistic rivalry. On the opening night, unhappily, Mr. Booth was not at his best. In the opening scenes he acted with his usual skill, verve, and diabolic intensity, and the responsive cooperation of the protagonists was a delightful study; but in the critical scene of Othello's assault upon him, overcome by nervous strain or temporary indisposition, his strength failed him, and he nearly fell headlong into the orchestra. Only Salvini's great strength and presence of mind prevented a fiasco. Supporting his associate, he kept on acting as if noth-

ing was wrong, and contrived to finish the act without irreparable disaster.

In "Hamlet" Mr. Booth was himself again, and played the Prince as no one but himself has played it within living memory. But the representation, as a whole, though a good one in many respects, brought disappointment to many Shakespearean students. In the first instance, Salvini had volunteered to play the King, a part which, in recent times at least, has never found a really competent actor. The reason is not far to seek. Actually the character is one requiring first-class ability for its proper interpretation. It is far more exacting in its complications of motives and emotions—though less difficult of comprehension —than the part of the Prince himself, in which, as has been said, no actor of moderate capacity ever failed completely. Hamlet has an inalienable fascination of his own, which provides a sort of insurance for the actor, but the King is not only a difficult but a repellent character, which offers the poor player little assistance. Few persons realize the enormous histrionic possibilities inherent in him. When Salvini was asked what character he would play in "Hamlet," he replied, "I will play either ze King or ze Ghost." Accordingly, he was cast for the King, and, beyond all question, his performance of it would

have amounted to a revelation of the dramatic energy latent in the part and its true importance, generally unsuspected, in the whole scheme of the tragedy. But soon he changed his mind, probably on account of an unwillingness to endanger his reputation by undertaking a character of this description at such short notice, and announced that he would play the Ghost, with whose lines and business he was, of course, entirely familiar. He attempted no innovations, playing the part upon strictly conventional lines, but no one who witnessed his performance will forget the organ-like roll of his declamation or the majesty of his port. No more solemn or imposing specter ever revisited the glimpses of the theatrical moon. Well might Hamlet say, "We shall not look upon his like again."

In any record, however brief and arbitrary, of the closing years of the nineteenth century in the New York theaters, the name of Lester Wallack must have a place. To the last he preserved his prestige as one of the most brilliant exponents of romantic comedy, but the end of his career was less fortunate than the beginning. Health and fortune both failed him, and his star paled. He survived many of the associates who had shared the glories of his prime; others abandoned his standard, and he was unable to replace them by

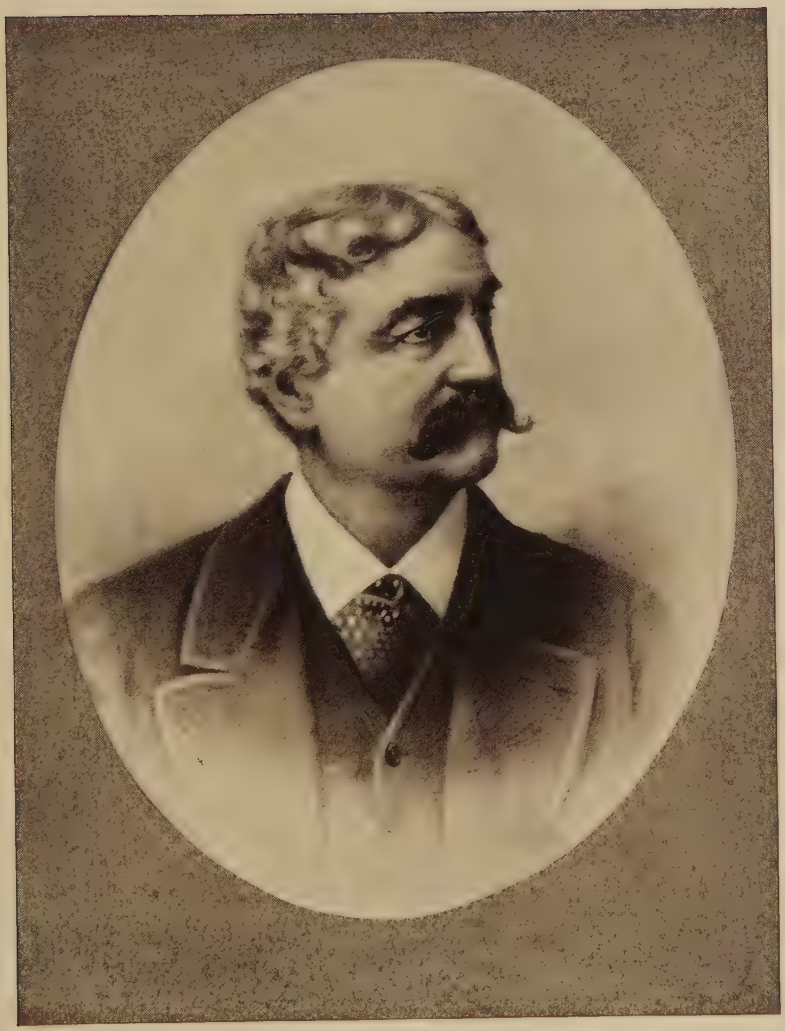
equivalent substitutes. But his company, though it suffered from dry-rot, always contained much excellent material, and acquitted itself creditably in standard plays long after he was unable to lead it in person. Many of his disastrous failures were due to a mistaken choice of plays—not to any inadequacy on the part of the performers. A case in point was the "Impulse," of B. C. Stephenson—produced in 1885—a piece full of theatrical situations, but wholly incredible in action and unsympathetic in its general character. It had a certain success in London, owing to a brilliant performance of the principal female character, which was not duplicated here. Mr. Wallack—who was not immune to the besetting weakness of actor-managers—produced it because he discerned in the figure of Colonel Crichton a part peculiarly well suited to himself. This was a gentleman bashful before the fair sex—Mr. Wallack's Charles Marlow was one of his happiest embodiments—somewhat slow in perception and speech, but brave and prompt in deed, tender, true, and chivalrous. He was, in short, the god in the machine, dominating the entire action, and disposing of every crisis by virtue of his infallibility as guide, censor, and arbiter. In such a character Wallack was in his element, and he enacted it with unflagging spirit, brilliancy, and

ease, giving temporary vitality and distinction to one of the most conventional and familiar of stage puppets.

His efforts, however, availed nothing to save the play, which was soon withdrawn, to be succeeded by "Diplomacy," in which he resumed his old character of Henry Beauclerc. By this time he was somewhat mature and heavy for the part of the astute young diplomat, but his handsome presence, his authoritative style, and his complete mastery of theatrical resource stood him in good stead, and he carried off the chief honors of the evening, although closely pressed by the Zicka of Rose Coghlan, always a fine piece of work. This, perhaps, was the last performance which was really worthy of his best days. He reappeared in "The Captain of the Watch," a little piece of light comedy in which he never had a rival, and as Colonel White in "Home," and soon afterward revived his own farcical comedy of "Central Park," a triviality which had aged a century in less than a generation. In his youth he had triumphed in it by the sheer force of animal spirits and personal fascination. Those were the days when his walks abroad were attended by bevies of secretly adoring women. Now he was no longer the dazzling Adonis, and the art of his autumn could not compensate for

the perished charms of his spring. Nor was there any dramatic substance to the play itself, which failed dismally and inevitably.

The final curtain for him was not far off. For two or three years a disabled leg kept him from the stage, although he still retained a considerable amount of bodily vigor. One more night of personal triumph awaited him. That occurred in May, 1888, when a public benefit was tendered to him in the Metropolitan Opera House. The scene was one long to be remembered, and must be reckoned among the most striking testimonials of popular esteem ever offered to an actor. Every class in the community was represented in the enormous audience, which filled every cranny in the vast interior. The play was "Hamlet," and the theatrical profession, eager to do honor to one of its most eminent members, contributed one of the most notable casts ever selected for the interpretation of the tragedy. A "star cast" does not necessarily mean much. Too often it is nothing but an aggregation of popular players, sufficiently capable in their own particular lines of business, but unaccustomed to each other, and not specially well fitted to the parts to which they may have been assigned, chiefly with reference to their own professional standing. But in this case the parts were distributed with the view



LESTER WALLACK

of securing the best possible performance, and the result was one of the most capable and interesting representations of the tragedy ever seen in this city. Edwin Booth was the Prince, and at first appeared somewhat listless, displaying only the mechanical smoothness begotten of a thousand rehearsals. But this attitude of easy assurance soon vanished. Modjeska was the Ophelia, and instantly made it apparent that her impersonation was to be one of no common note. As she stepped upon the stage the delicate grace of her presence created a general rustle of expectancy among the spectators, and thereafter her every gesture and utterance were followed with eager appreciation. For once the heroine of the drama assumed her proper significance. She was no longer a mere symbol of sweetly pathetic girlish insipidity, but a live woman, modest, gentle, and a trifle distraught, as if conscious of a secret burthen, but quick in intelligence, alert in manner, with a sparkle in her eyes, and warm blood coursing through her veins. She was an object not only of sympathy, but of admiration. The applause lavished upon her acted like a tonic upon Mr. Booth, too long accustomed to regard his Ophelias as subservient instruments for the Prince to play upon, and quickly his acting began to glow with all the fire of his earlier

years. His Hamlet was always exquisite in reading, subtle in byplay, and flawlessly smooth in execution, but the challenge of so great an actress as Modjeska put new spurs to his intent, and he played with unwonted concentration, energy, and spirit. He probably never again acted the part so finely. In the renunciation scene he excelled himself, being put, indeed, to his utmost mettle by the additional tensity which the responsive, picturesque, and eloquent acting of Modjeska imparted to the situation. This particular episode had never been interpreted so effectively since the days of Fechter and Kate Terry, and it provoked a storm of enthusiasm in which the players divided the honors.

In her mad scene Modjeska had her own personal triumph. She had prepared the way for it by her subtle but definite manifestations of genuine love for Hamlet, which enabled her to deepen the pathos of her disjointed utterances with a note of wrecked passion. The variety of her tone, gesture, and expression was extraordinary, and it would scarcely be extravagant to speak of her performance as an original inspiration. It was fashioned, of course, upon traditional models, but in freshness, vitality, and felicity of detail was superior to all of them. Lawrence Barrett enacted the Ghost with impressive dignity

and sonorous declamation. Frank Mayo was overweighted in the part of the King, but acquitted himself respectably, while Gertrude Kellogg did excellently as the Queen. Eben Plympton filled the part of Laertes with notable fire and passion, and old John Gilbert was an admirable Polonius, free from all buffoonery, slow in wit, and portentous in speech, but venerable withal, courtly, and, within certain limitations, shrewdly wise. Joseph Wheelock gave notable effect to the bombast of the First Actor, and Rose Coghlan made a figure of the Player Queen.

And then there was the delightful First Grave Digger of Joseph Jefferson. The actor made no effort to disguise his personality, but fitted the character perfectly, filling the lines with his own natural humor, and illustrating it with the happiest of byplay. As his companion Digger, W. J. Florence had very little opportunity, but out of it made a perfect little character sketch. The world will be considerably older before another such worthy representation of "Hamlet" is witnessed. It was a memorable evening, of which the culmination came when Lester Wallack, white-haired, stalwart, and handsome, was revealed standing by a bank of flowers. With all his usual sense of stage effect he expressed his grateful appreciation of the honor conferred upon him,

and his determination to court public favor once more before the footlights, as soon as his "rebellious limb" had been reduced to subjection. Not many months later he was laid in his grave.

XIX

MODJESKA AND RISTORI

Modjeska was an ornament to the New York stage, at intervals, for many years, and she became a popular favorite from Maine to California. Her performances as Adrienne, Camille, Juliet, Viola, and Rosalind have been described in the first part of these memoirs, and it is unnecessary to revert to them. But she played many other parts, not all of equal importance, which demonstrated the great range of her abilities. In 1886 she appeared in "Les Chouans," a romantic melodrama, adapted by Paul M. Potter from a piece which Pierre Berton had made out of material in Balzac's story. Dramatically and artistically it was rubbish, but it was crammed with theatrical sensations. Modjeska had the part of a woman who fell desperately in love with the man whom she had agreed to betray, was wrongfully suspected and abominably maltreated by him, and finally, after reconciliation and innumerable trials, was shot down in an attempt to rescue him. Only her acting redeemed

the piece from absolute futility. She proved herself as capable of melodramatic emotional expression as Bernhardt herself. In scenes of love, grief, terror, indignation, and rage she exhibited every phase of passionate tenderness, abject misery, hauteur, and stormy passion, revealing a physical vigor surprising in a woman of her slender form. She invested the violent episodes with an atmosphere of romance which gave them picturesqueness and plausibility. Next she produced an English version of a drama by the German dramatist, Philippi. As Daniela, the heroine, she played the part of a virtuous wife who incurred the suspicions of the husband for whose sake she was sacrificing herself. The theme, which has been treated since in a modified form by Pinero, is of no importance, but it afforded the actress an opportunity of showing the ease with which she could turn from the extravagance of melodrama to the naturalism of serious domestic comedy. She was equally effective as the loving wife and the outraged woman, being especially impressive in her moments of righteous anger and contemptuous scorn.

In 1888, reverting to the poetic drama, she made her first appearance in this city in the character of Imogen in Shakespeare's "Cymbeline." This impersonation can not be accounted among

her greatest successes. It was a brilliant sketch rather than a completed study. But it bore many marks of her peculiar genius. As the young wife laboring under the sorrow of her impending separation from her husband, the suggestion of silent suffering in her pose and a certain indefinable air of purity won her audience at once. Her parting from Posthumus was instinct with fervent affection, and her defense of him against the reproaches of Cymbeline reflected true nobility of soul. Her most artistic achievement, perhaps, was in her first scene with Iachimo. Her joyous excitement over the reception of her husband's letter, the innocent bewilderment with which she listened to the tentative insinuations of her tempter, her progressive indignation as the full significance of them dawned upon her, and the splendid burst of mingled scorn and passion with which she resented the supreme outrage to her chastity demonstrated the keenness and sureness of her artistic perception and the wealth of artistic resources at her command. In no other part of the play were her abilities severely taxed. There was simple pathos of the purest kind in the scene with Pisanio in the wood, near Milford Haven, especially during her perusal of the missive from Posthumus ordering her death, and many touches of delightful comedy, in her best

manner—with relapses into pathetic tenderness—before the cave of Belarius, but the revival was only partly successful. The concluding scenes were mutilated in such fashion as to be barely intelligible, and interest in them flagged in spite of her utmost endeavors. The whole production, indeed, with the exception of the Leonatus of Eben Plympton, which was excellent, and the Pisanio of Robert Taber, which was respectable, was one of the shabbiest and most contemptible imaginable. In this Modjeska was only following the evil example of Edwin Booth, but failed, seemingly, to reflect that the latter confined himself, for the most part, to plays of tried popularity. "Cymbeline" has never been a popular play, and needs first-class acting to make it effective. It met with considerable success at Sadler's Wells, when Phelps often played Leonatus, but always with a company of good players behind him. Modjeska was too intelligent to be subject to the delusion that a great actor shines all the more in contrast with the dulness of his associates. The reverse of this is the fact. It is only when capably supported that the leading actor can create his best effects. Macready was forever lamenting the ruin of his finest conceptions by the ineptitude of his subordinates.

After the failure of "Cymbeline," Madame

Modjeska essayed the hazardous experiment of a production of "Measure for Measure," a play which had been absent from the stage for many years. She was tempted to it, doubtless, by a desire to act Isabella, but the character was one with which she proved to be in imperfect sympathy. Curiously enough, considering the emotional eloquence of which she had often shown herself capable, she did not seem to grasp the true nature of the spiritual torture to which Isabella was subjected. Her performance, it is almost unnecessary to say, was not deficient in gracious dignity, personal charm, or tender feeling; but it was lacking in energy and poignancy. She did herself full justice only in her denunciation of Angelo upon his declaration of lawless passion. Here she was superb in gesture, pose, and spirit, but at other times, in comparison with her usual brilliancy, she was strangely tame and ineffective. It was scarcely worth while to risk so much for the sake of one moment of triumph. Actually the representation was chiefly notable on account of a remarkable bit of acting in the prison scene by Robert Taber as Claudio. In pleading with his sister for his life he counterfeited a paroxysm of groveling fear with such startling sincerity and realism that he eclipsed Modjeska herself and furnished the one dramatic sensation

of the evening. The achievement, not so difficult a one as it may have seemed to the uninitiated, created a reputation for him which, unfortunately, he did not live long enough to justify.

By the revival itself nothing was accomplished for the benefit of the public, the fame of the actress, or the credit of Shakespeare. The expediency of it might be challenged on many grounds. Obviously, in its original shape, the play is unfit for representation before a modern audience, but that was no reason why it should have been mangled with such savage inexpertness. The expurgation was done without reference to cohesion, and much objectionable and unnecessary matter was retained. Consequently, the general result was a melancholy and indescribable hodge-podge in which most of the incapable actors floundered hopelessly. Doubtless Modjeska obeyed an artistic impulse in undertaking an unhackneyed Shakespearean part, of much literary and dramatic value, but she would have been wiser if she had entrusted the task of actual production to a manager of greater experience and discernment.

She soon realized her mistake—although she repeated it with no better fortune seven years later—and delighted all her admirers by a return to Shakespearean comedy, presenting herself for the first time as Beatrice in "Much Ado About

Nothing." This proved a companion piece to her Rosalind, although not quite equal to that exquisite embodiment. In physical fascination, brilliant intelligence, and artistic resource she was wonderfully well equipped for that glittering and sterling specimen of womanhood, and her success in it was immediate and lasting. The natural and buoyant grace of her carriage, her mobile and expressive features, her mastery of apt and animated gesture, and her marked capacity for bantering humor were eminent qualifications for the character. In the rapier play of wit she acquitted herself with admirable dexterity, delivering her point with penetrating emphasis. Arch, provocative, alluring, and prickly, she was a bewitching creature.

But one phase of the character—and that typical—she missed or slurred. In her intense appreciation and enjoyment of the witty shafts, of which she had a quiverful, she failed to bring into sufficient relief the latent strength—the essential pride—of Beatrice's character. There was nothing in her Beatrice that would dishearten or hold at bay the most bashful or cautious lover who had once fallen under the spell of her enchantment. Her satire often lacked the spice of earnestness to give it sting. It was conceived too persistently in the mood of girlish merriment,

She did not catch the full significance of "My Lady Disdain." There were moments when she forgot her dignity. When, for instance, she was sent "against my will" to bid Benedick come to dinner, she yawned elaborately and stretched herself, which was not only a flagrant breach of good manners in a fine lady of the court, but an obvious perversion of the author's intent. Blemishes of this kind, however, were exceedingly rare in an impersonation remarkable for its grace, vivacity, and intellectual distinction. This particular one is noted because of its inconsistency with her interpretation of the church scene in which the true Beatrice—with all the finer womanhood hidden behind her mask—was much more vividly presented, although even here, at the crisis, she did not give to the "Kill Claudio" all the passionate vehemence of which she had often proved herself capable. But there was moving sincerity in her championship of Hero—"Oh! on my soul, my cousin is belied!"—and in the closing passages with Benedick, with their subtle intermingling of varied emotion—pity, love, and scorn—her acting was brilliant. Other actresses have equalled her in some parts of the play, and excelled her in others, but of all the Beatrices I have seen she was one of the very best. And on this occasion she enjoyed the ad-

vantages of a fairly competent supporting cast. Eben Plympton was a consistent and effective, if somewhat unimaginative, Benedick, laying stress upon his soldierly qualities and endowing him with sturdy virility; Robert Taber was an excellent Antonio, and William F. Owen a genuinely amusing Dogberry.

In these later days our "stars" are content to repeat indefinitely the characters in which they have been conspicuously successful. But Modjeska, inspired by the true artistic temperament, was always seeking to enlarge her repertory and win triumphs in new directions. She was ill advised when in 1892 she essayed the part of Queen Katharine, and especially in depending for her support upon a cast which fell little short of the grotesque in its absolute unfitness. Although she spoke English with fluency, she never fully overcame her foreign intonation and accent, and it is possible that, perfect as was her comprehension of her own lines, she was often unconscious of the terrible hash that some of her associates were making of theirs. On any other ground it is difficult to understand how she could have dreamed of success in presenting "Henry VIII" with such a Wolsey as John A. Lane—one of the most wooden of old-timers—or such a Buckingham as Beaumont Smith, not to allude

to subordinates yet more direful. Here she was repeating the errors committed in "Cymbeline" and "Measure for Measure." It is unlikely that even with the most favorable surroundings she could have succeeded greatly in a part for which she was not well suited and with which she was not in full sympathy. In royalty of mien, grace of manner, and womanly pathos she fulfilled all requirements, but the robuster elements in the Queen's nature—the revolting spirit which intensified the tragedy of her situation—eluded her. The portrait she presented was painted with skill and some insight, but needed bolder coloring and firmer outlines to make it vital. In the "Lord Cardinal, to you I speak," and the "I will when you are humble," she created no such thrilling dramatic effect as Charlotte Cushman, Mrs. Charles Kean, Miss Atkinson, and other actresses of less repute made at these points. It was suffering womanhood rather than tortured majesty that she exemplified. She was at her best in the death scene, which she made beautifully tender and solemn, but the impersonation can not be set down among her greatest histrionic accomplishments.

Genius as she was, she was not exempt from the weaknesses and hallucinations prevalent among most members of her profession. One

of these is the delusion that, because in many good and popular plays there are violent and improbable incidents, an aggregation of startling episodes, without reference to common sense, is the essence of strong drama. She must have been subject to it when she ventured to produce, in 1895, "Mistress Betty," one of the worst specimens of the hack-work of the late Clyde Fitch. The obvious motive of it was to afford her an opportunity of displaying the infinite variety of her histrionic resources, and this, in a way, it did. But the scheme of it was so ridiculous in its incoherence and disregard of human nature that all the conscientious labors of Modjeska to rationalize it were painfully futile. The heroine was a great actress, who married a duke, only to discover that he was a worthless profligate, in love with somebody else. So she leaves him, but presently returns to find him a reformed and worthy character. Therefore she proposes to forget the past and resume conjugal relations. But he explains that he is now devoted to his cousin, whereupon, because her love for him is greater than ever, she promises to disappear, that he may be free to marry the girl of his choice. This sacrifice he is too noble to accept, so she falsely tells him that she has become the mistress of his bosom friend, Lord Phillips, and when that inno-

cent gentleman unexpectedly appears throws herself into his arms with a repetition of her lying confession. Lord Phillips vigorously denies the soft impeachment, but finally—whether on account of embarrassment or politeness does not much matter—admits the truth of it, and carries her off. In the final act Betty dies mad, solacing her last moments by rehearsing fragments of the various plays in which she had been famous. Modjeska's acting left nothing to be desired, but the prostitution of her finished art in such miserable trash was a melancholy spectacle.

In February, 1898, Madame Modjeska opened a short engagement in the Fifth Avenue Theater with a revival of "Mary Stuart," a play associated with many of her earliest triumphs. The character of the luckless Queen—the stage character, that is—was one to which her artistic temperament and methods were peculiarly well adapted. She was beginning now to show the signs of advancing years. The electric energy of her prime was diminishing, but the cunning of ripe experience more than compensated any loss of physical vigor. Her intellect was as alert and her dramatic instinct as sure as ever; and if her execution was, in a certain indefinable way, a little less sharp and instantaneous than of yore, it retained all its suggestiveness, appropriateness,

and charm. It is only in really great acting, such as hers, that minor details cease to be important. In the case of ordinary well-trained but uninspired performers it is easy to note even insignificant delinquencies, but the great actor, by establishing complete momentary illusion, so dazzles the perception that all sense of the means employed is lost in recognition of the effect. She never played Mary with more symmetrical beauty, a happier combination of royal dignity, feminine charm, and poignant pathos than in these latter days. The climax of scorn and fury to which she attained in the famous encounter with Elizabeth was magnificent, and her approach to it through various gradations of emotions, ever increasing in intensity, as her imperious antagonist proved herself impregnable to deference, entreaty, expostulation, or protest, was a wonderful feat of artistic calculation. In the closing scenes, the parting from her attendants, the passage with Burleigh, the farewell to Leicester, and her final exit to the block, the spiritual elevation and unaffected pathos of her acting held the spectators rapt in silence and dissolved in tears. On the whole, her impersonation can be ranked with those of Ristori and Janauschek. Both these actresses excelled her in the highest flights of tragic passion, largely owing to their

possession of greater physical power, but neither of them was her equal in respect to romantic fascination.

It was her success in "Mary Stuart," possibly, that prompted her to impersonate another unfortunate queen, Marie Antoinette, in a pseudo-historical drama written for her by Clinton Stuart. The piece itself, though in no way remarkable, was a respectable effort, and not unskilful in its dramatic contrasts between the frivolous life at Little Trianon and the sufferings and humiliations culminating at the guillotine. The virtues of the heroine were, as might be expected, somewhat absurdly exaggerated, but Mr. Stuart was far more fortunate than Clyde Fitch in his attempt to provide an effective vehicle for the display of Modjeska's talents. She illuminated the somewhat trivial and conventional court scenes in the opening act by means of her sparkling byplay and infectious natural humor that gave special brilliancy to all her light comedy work. Her mimicry of an amateur performer was a delightful bit of refined burlesque. In the second act, in an interview with Mirabeau—the best scene of the play—when she contended vainly for her supposed rights as Queen, and was forced by the inexorable logic of circumstances to make hateful concessions, she exhibited all her old facility

in interpreting a variety of impulses and emotions—suspicion, hauteur, anger, humiliation and counterfeit resignation. She addressed an angry mob in the Tuileries with a splendid assumption of queenly dignity and courage, exerted all her old power of pathos in the successive incidents connected with the trial and execution of her husband and herself, and afforded one of her most striking exhibitions of superb tragic passion at the moment when, by an inhuman decree, she was separated from the Dauphin. This was her one great chance in the play, which might have been more fruitful in this respect, and she availed herself of it to the fullest. Her individual success was brilliant, but, as was often the case, she was badly handicapped by the poverty of her support, and especially by the doleful and woeful Louis of Mr. John E. Kellerd. The performance would have profited much if the execution of that monarch had been expedited.

In closing this sketch of an actress who was undoubtedly one of the greatest of modern times, it is only necessary to refer briefly to her Lady Macbeth. This was a character which she never could fully grasp or express. The formidable essence of it was foreign to her nature and apparently beyond her power of perception. She did nothing ill, and in her performance there

was much to excite interest and admiration, but it never gripped the imagination or stirred the pulse. It was only in the sleep-walking scene, in which few actresses have failed completely, that she was really fine, and even in that there was something wanting. She furnished a wonderful and distressful picture of remorseful despair, but she stirred feelings of pity only, not of dread and horror. It was in the forceful and tragic note that the whole embodiment was deficient. When I saw it for the last time, in 1900, it did not differ materially from what it was years before, although it had gained somewhat in smoothness and consistency. Again she was miserably supported. Her Macbeth, John E. Kellerd, murdered many things besides sleep. But even when she had Edwin Booth for the Thane she was not much inspired by his example. It was plain that the part was one with which she had little affinity. Great emotional actress as she was, she had not the vigor or the impulse for tragedy of the severest and most heroic order. It was in comedy, social or romantic, melodrama, and in poetic romance that her versatility, imagination, emotional eloquence, and almost inexhaustible artistry were manifested most triumphantly. For many years she was the brightest feminine ornament of the American stage, and when it is

remembered that she played in what was not her native tongue, and often amid most discouraging surroundings, her career and achievement will appear yet more remarkable.

The recent reference to Ristori suggests that this may be a convenient place to speak of her farewell visit to this country in the winter of 1884-85. Ten years before, in the full bloom of her genius, with an Italian company, she had appeared in New York in a series of the characterizations that had won for her an almost world-wide fame. Then every tribute of critical and popular admiration was laid at her feet. In all that she did she proved herself a great artist and an actress of the first rank, although, even in her most exalted moments, she never suggested any comparison with the overwhelming power or astonishing versatility of Salvini. I saw all those performances. Her Elizabeth was generally acknowledged to be her masterpiece, and, beyond question, it was a wonderful feat of impersonation, embodying the popular ideal of England's Virgin Queen with extraordinary felicity. The haughty carriage, imperious address, fierce temper, blunt humor, masculine sagacity, petty vanity, and feminine jealousy, were all indicated with surpassing skill and blended into a consistent whole with finished artistry. The perform-

ance was a very fine one, but there was nothing in it significant of phenomenal capacity. I remember that a number of contemporary commentators dilated upon the scene, which has legendary, if not historical, warrant, in which the Queen dictates two dispatches simultaneously while maintaining an ordinary conversation, as an extraordinary demonstration of the mental power of the actress. It really was a clever piece of acting, but the credit for the original conceit belonged, of course, to the dramatist, Giacometti, who invented it. But the fact that it was accorded to Ristori, who simply followed the stage directions and spoke the words that she had learned by rote, is a striking indication of the success with which she identified herself with the fictitious character.

It was an evil hour in which she permitted herself to be tempted to repeat in English the triumphs she had won in her native Italian. Possibly she was influenced by the example of Modjeska, or hoped to conquer another hemisphere like Salvini. But the latter, wise in his way as Bernhardt in hers, never could be persuaded to act in any language but his own. He did agree, indeed, to a polyglot arrangement in itself wholly indefensible, but was able to silence hostile comment by the brilliancy with which he overcame

all obstacles. Ristori, however, in undertaking to act in a language of which she knew little or nothing, and which she was too old to acquire, voluntarily accepted a fatal handicap. Nor was this the only difficulty with which she had to contend. The public was apathetic, and her managers, presumably with the notion of making a larger profit (it is pleasant to reflect that they must have lost heavily), engaged for her support a company that can only be described as execrable. The result was disastrous. She elected to appear first as Elizabeth, and must have been chilled to the heart when, instead of the vast, brilliant, and enthusiastic audience of other years, she saw before her a beggarly array of empty benches. Whether she had been forgotten by her former admirers, or they were fearful of shattering pleasing illusions, boots not to inquire. She was deserted even by her compatriots.

There was small cause for wonder, perhaps, at the enormous difference between the Ristori of the present and the Ristori of the past. Not that the famous Italian revealed any symptoms of decay in bodily vigor or dramatic aptitude. Her presence was as stalwart and handsome, her voice as full and rich, and her movements as energetic as before, but her acting seemed to have been bereft of its most salient character-

istics, spontaneity, subtlety, finish, and fire. It seemed as if the shackles of the unfamiliar English—against which she vainly struggled—had affected her acting faculties with a pervading and disabling paralysis. There were occasional gleams of the ancient fire, in the scene with Essex, for instance, in the episode of signing Mary's death warrant, and again in the defiance of Spain—which reverberated with patriotic spirit—but the impersonation, in its entirety, was colorless and ineffective in comparison with that of the preceding decade. She was no more successful when she made her second essay as Mary Stuart. Once or twice she recalled memories of her ancient self, as in the encounter with Elizabeth at Fotheringay, and in the dignified pathos of the concluding act, but compared with her earlier impersonations this one was but as the shadow of a shade. Her final appearance was made as Lady Macbeth, and on this occasion, for the first time, she was greeted by an audience of respectable size. This evidently encouraged her, for in the great crises of the tragedy she exhibited flashes of the power which had once raised thunders of applause. It is possible that if she had played in Italian she might, by her own unaided prowess, have turned defeat into victory, even with the serio-comic cast which

MADAME RISTORI

as "Marie Antoinette"

as "Mary Stuart"

was not the least of her impediments, but as it was she was crushed and dispirited by the weight of accumulated misfortunes. Seldom has a great career ended so sadly. Perhaps there may be a modicum of consolation in the thought that the collapse was not due to senile decay of mind or body, but to a grievous mistake on her part and the greedy and foolish mismanagement of her commercial agents. She was still Ristori. It was not a case of the veteran lagging superfluous upon the stage.

XX

HENRY IRVING AND ELLEN TERRY

Henry Irving and Ellen Terry were very prominent figures upon the New York stage during the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century. They appeared in many new characters, but the enlargement of their repertory was not attended by any notable development of their histrionic powers, but rather confirmed the partial summary of them made in the earlier chapters of these notes. It will not be necessary, therefore, in a sketchy narrative of this sort to analyze every fresh performance too particularly. In 1885, they began a new season here with W. G. Wills's romantic melodrama, "Eugene Aram," which manifestly was intended to furnish Mr. Irving with a character akin to that of Mathias in "The Bells," which was so nicely suited to his artistic idiosyncrasies. He already, it may be remembered, had attracted wide attention by his thrilling recitation of Hood's poem on the remorseful schoolmaster. In his play, written with his customary cleverness, Mr. Wills sacrificed every consideration of probability and truth to his poetic and

dramatic, or rather theatrical, necessity. He pictured Aram as an innocent and harmless scholar, who, in a paroxysm of righteous fury, under intense provocation, had stricken down a villain who had cruelly betrayed the girl with whom he was in love. In the circumstances it was not easy to believe in the likelihood of a remorse which killed the homicide in the end after torturing him for fifteen years. Moreover, this violent modification of the original story made the terrible influence which the villain, Houseman, was supposed to exercise over his victim wholly illogical and not a little absurd. The play carried no conviction with it, and was only a moderate success in spite of its admirable performance and beautiful setting.

Irving, as usual, was more successful in his suggestion of suppressed than in his utterance of liberated passion. As a grave lover, plunged in moody melancholy, he played with charming refinement and delicacy, but he was most impressive in a scene with his evil genius, Houseman, in which he had to portray the triumph of will over physical terror and racking anxiety, and of sheer intellect over brutal ruffianism. His individual mentality was ever one of the most potent elements in Irving's acting. This was most vividly expressed in the rigid lines of his resolute

but haggard face as he confronted and gradually overawed his burly and savage adversary—portrayed with rugged realism by Wenman—and the mocking laugh with which he proclaimed his superiority, when the battle had been won, was a master stroke of theatrical art, although the note of victorious rascality sounded in it was scarcely in full accordance with the supposed nature of the man. But when he surrendered himself to a paroxysm of remorse he resorted to exaggerations of speech and gesture which bordered so closely on burlesque that irrevent observers tittered. Nearly all his tragic or semi-tragic impersonations were marred by hysterical ineptitudes of this kind. In his case they can not be ascribed to any deficiency in artistic intelligence. I believe that they were largely due to efforts on his part to produce effects—clearly conceived in his own mind—which he had not the muscular or vocal strength to realize. Partly they were abominable mannerisms, as were some of his elocutionary tricks. Within certain limits of intensity he could simulate hysterical abandonment with indisputable veracity. A notable instance of this was his description of the murder, which was exceedingly well done. Ellen Terry, as the heroine, was graceful, charming, and sympathetic in her own delightful way.

In 1887 Mr. Irving brought to this country the version of the first part of "Faust," which W. G. Wills had made with a special view to spectacle and the exhibition of his Mephistopheles. Upon this production he had lavished every form of attraction suggested by experience, taste, or liberality. A more beautiful, artistic, or imaginative setting has rarely, if ever, been seen upon the stage. Did space permit it would be pleasant to dwell upon the pictorial qualities of such scenes as those of the St. Lorenz Platz and the Revels of the Brocken. In these, and others, the picturesque realism was so complete that no fanciful symbolism was needed to reinforce it. Mr. Irving was accused, in some quarters, of having sacrificed some of his professional dignity in adopting commercial methods and offering gorgeous pictures as compensation for an inferior play. But this was scarcely fair. The play itself, it is true, was not very precious, either as literature or drama, but it was founded upon a masterpiece, and was neither undignified nor trivial. At the worst, it was a play which was not altogether worthy of its superlatively rich setting. The Mephistopheles of Irving, alone, would have made it worth while. This was not a great creation—the part itself had nothing in common with the Miltonic fiend, the arch enemy,

of faded splendor wan—but it was extraordinarily clever and interesting, with a fine flavor of the diabolic, perfectly consistent in its sardonic humor and malignity and its intellectual alacrity. In pose and action it was constantly indicative of vast and persistent energy, while in facial expression it was, as might have been expected, singularly eloquent. The invariable expertness of the actor in giving the most pregnant emphasis to a cynical line was utilized to the utmost in this character. His utterance of his apostrophe regarding Martha, "I wonder where she will go when she dies. I won't have her," was delicious.

The ironical malevolence underlying the affected bonhomie in the first temptation scene of Faust, finding expression in the steely glitter of his observant eyes and the cruel smile flickering about the corners of his implacable lips, was full of menace, and every detail of his byplay as he hungrily watched Margaret in her chamber, was most subtly conceived. There was terrible eloquence in the furtive twitching of his fingers, when he placed the jewels around her neck, as if, by anticipation, he already had her soul in his clutches. There was weird significance in the saturnine gravity of his wooing scenes with Martha, his quietude being far more formidable than his occasional outbursts of rage. There was noth-

ing awful in his "I'll tear you all to pieces," or in his "Hither to me!" when he made his final exit with Faust. On the other hand, he created an effect of genuine terror when he abandoned himself to a fit of unearthly laughter in the Brocken scene. In this outburst of savage glee there was the echo of an unfathomable despair which was truly tragic. It was an intellectual conception finely executed.

In presence this Mephistopheles, tall, gaunt, active, assured in poise, and with keen, ascetic face, was a picturesque figure that gripped attention. Never for an instant did it savor of the ordinary or of burlesque. It was from first to last a felicitous embodiment of the spirit that denies, and had nothing in common with the conventional theatrical demon, even where the play was most theatrical. Always intellectual, it was especially notable for the superfine edge of its mockery. As for Ellen Terry, she was a different Margaret from any ever dreamed of before, but one of exquisite charm. In her bedroom scene her assumption of girlish youth and complete innocence was wonderful. She looked and acted as a virgin of eighteen. I can think of no other actress who could have interpreted this episode with such innocent unconsciousness. Her lovemaking was all that is tender and grace-

ful, and her grief most pretty and pathetic. She evoked a storm of applause by the simple kissing of her lover's hand, so eloquent was the gesture of love and faith and sweet submission. In the dungeon scene she repeated the triumph of her Ophelia and virtually by identical methods. George Alexander was a manly, graceful, and ardent Faust.

In "The Vicar of Wakefield" ("Olivia") of W. G. Wills, which he produced in 1888, Mr. Irving won one of his greatest popular successes in this country. This he owed partly to the appeal of the play itself, partly to the generally admirable performance of it, and partly to the artistic beauty and appropriateness of his scenic accessories. For gorgeous spectacle, of course, there was no opportunity. The charm and value of the setting resided in the exquisite fitness and harmony of the surroundings, the delicate and unerring perception with which the spirit and atmosphere of the homely tale were caught and preserved, and the skill with which every minor detail was designed to heighten and maintain illusion. Even the supernumeraries, villagers, and others were living, sentient, and purposeful creatures. Children actually played, old folk gossipped, the younger swains paid court to their chosen fair, and on all sides were the subdued hum

and motion of real life. The parlor of the vicarage—the picture lives in the memory like some famous old canvas—was perfect in tone and decoration, with its old spinet, chairs, and tables, the fireplace with its accoutrements, the latticed window with its cosy recesses. A less tactful and dainty manager would have fallen into the error of overfurnishing, but there was neither too much nor too little, just enough to indicate a condition of modest ease. A companion picture was provided in the fourth act, where the good doctor and his rescued daughter stepped from the snow and moonlight without into the darkness of the deserted home. It is worth while, even at this distance, to recall the pictorial beauty of these incidents, because, in their veracity, insight, and significance, they illustrate the potentialities of an art peculiar to the stage, but very rarely exhibited in its perfection.

The performance, as a whole, was worthy of its frame. The impersonation of the Vicar by Henry Irving, admirable in many ways, was marred by many exasperating blemishes. In the first act there was much to praise and little to criticize. Inevitable curiosities of enunciation occurred occasionally, but nothing to offend seriously the sensibilities of eyes or ears. It was not wholly the Primrose of Goldsmith, having a

tinge of melancholy and a certain scholastic air not usually associated with the idea of the simple, sturdy, combative country parson, but it was winning in its gentle, natural dignity and paternal tenderness. The devoted love of a father for a favorite daughter could scarcely have been indicated more eloquently than it was by Mr. Irving in the scenes between the Vicar and Olivia. He really suggested the idolatry for which he expected to be punished sooner or later. But when he came to the point in the second act where he was called upon to give vent to the rage and anguish with which his heart was wrung, when he heard of that beloved child's ruin, he failed to rise to the emergency. Never surely did virile rage or grief manifest itself in such incoherent fashion. All the poignancy of the scene was destroyed by the transparent artificiality and insincerity of the means employed. His symbols were arbitrary, unnatural, and unintelligible. Affectation so inscrutable, following simplicity so convincing was doubly irritating. He made amends for much of this in the third act, by the dignified restraint of his rebuke to Thornhill, in which he expressed, with infective realism, the quiver of an emotion too deep for utterance, and by his touching manifestation of compassionate love upon the restoration of his daughter. The Olivia of Ellen

Terry was endowed with all the indescribable personal charm of her personality. It was the same type of womanhood which she had presented many times before, but was none the less fresh because of its familiarity. In airy grace, playfulness, archness, and plaintive melancholy it was bewitching, but it stirred no true chord of passion or despair. The most memorable feature of it was the ebullition of joy with which she received permission from her betrayer to return to her home. George Alexander played Thornhill with skill and ability, indicating the coarse and selfish nature of the rake with sufficient clearness, but not so aggressively as to deprive him of all sympathy.

No other actor—since Macready, at any rate—but Irving would have had the courage, even if he had the capacity, to produce the "Becket" of Lord Tennyson. He was attracted, of course, by the character of the able, bold, and ambitious priest, which was in many ways eminently well suited to his artistic powers and temperament, but would not venture to play it until he had obtained permission to make important structural changes in a work but ill-adapted for stage representation. No justification is needed for his effort to reinforce it by all legitimate spectacular means. But his setting was not of the flashy or con-

ventional kind. In tone, in drawing, in perspective, and in architectural and chronological accuracy his pictures were all that the most fastidious critic could desire. They supplemented, but did not dominate, the play. His Becket, although of unequal excellence, was a noble and authoritative performance. His mannerisms grew more persistent and aggressive with advancing years, but the refinement and austerity of his style (when in repose) and the intellectual and ascetic cast of his countenance were in nice harmony with the character of the high-minded and imperious prelate. He was at his best in the earlier scenes, as, for instance, when playing at chess with the King, in his sympathetic delivery of the pretty passage comparing women with flowers, in his grave reception of the King's confidences concerning Rosamund, and in his attitude during the King's offer of the archbishopric. His changed manner in the second act, when the impulse of the soldier and statesman is in conflict with the spiritual enthusiasm of the priest, revealed his thorough comprehension of the character as drawn by Tennyson, and nothing could be much truer or more pathetic than his portrayal of utter weariness beneath the heavy load of a double responsibility. Excellent again were his delivery of the fine soliloquy "Am I the

man?", his paternal treatment of Rosamund and his contemptuous dismissal of Fitzurse. In all these passages his choicest abilities were displayed. Very noble was his dauntless bearing before the hostile bishops at Northampton Castle, but, quite characteristically, in the more exacting episodes attending the King's entry and withdrawal, he had recourse to some of his worst tricks of speech and gesture. In the fourth act he made a great recovery. Patient endurance, indomitable will, and spiritual exaltation were denoted with inspiring effect in the final scene with Rosamund, in the encounter with the murderous knights, and in the closing interview with John of Salisbury. The end of the tragedy, with its superb stage management, was splendidly impressive. As Rosamund, Ellen Terry was a creature of ethereal loveliness and grace, provoking tender sympathy, but no deeper feeling. Terriss was good as the King, and Jessie Millward filled Eleanor with vindictive energy.

In December, 1893, Mr. Irving produced "Henry VIII," and it is safe to say that no such impressive representation of the play had been seen before in this country. The richness, solidity, and accuracy of the settings, the splendor and vitality of the groupings, and the level excellence of the performance all contributed to its

artistic and educational value. Among the pictures which remain most vividly impressed upon the memory are the dimly lighted hall in the palace at Bridewell, whose lofty walls and gloomy aspect lent sinister significance to the dramatic encounter of the Cardinal and his predestined foe; the quaintly decorated council chamber in the palace, and the great hall at York, with its golden throne and canopy, its throng of gayly dressed guests, and its masked dance, one of the prettiest old-time measures seen on the stage for many a day. Particularly fine in perspective, distance, and atmosphere was the King's Stairs, Westminister, where the fated Buckingham, with the broad and shining river and a distant city at his back, delivered his dying speech to animated groups of soldiers, sheriffs, and civilians.

No less remarkable in color and effect was the interior at Blackfriars, with the Court assembled for the trial of the Queen. On the left, on his throne, sat the King, in full pomp, girded by courtiers and attendants; in the middle foreground, around a long table, were ranged the secretaries and other officials in their robes; on the right was the accused Queen, a blaze of gold, jewels, and embroidery, supported by her household; and in the center, on a raised dais, the dominating presence of the two scarlet Cardinals,

Wolsey and Campeius, the real manipulators of all the puppets at their feet. The coronation procession of Anne Bullen furnished another scene of extraordinary spectacular brilliancy, while the vision of angels hovering above the dying Katharine was a transparency of rare delicacy and beauty.

And the interpretation of the play was worthy of the decoration bestowed upon it. The Wolsey of Irving, virtually an original conception, provoked a wide diversity of critical opinion here and in England. It differed radically from that of most of his famous predecessors, and constantly challenged attack and admiration. Certainly it was not the Wolsey of tradition, but forceful intellect was in every fiber of it. Pictorially it filled the stage and almost monopolized the attention of the spectator. Scarcely an instant passed but some suggestive look, pose, or gesture gave a flash of illumination to the dramatic scene. It might be said that the theatrical design of it all was too apparent. Men of Wolsey's strong, resolute, and intriguing type do not wear their hearts upon their sleeves for daws to peck at. Moreover, this Wolsey had a suppleness and refinement inconsistent with the lowness of his origin and that pugnacious disposition which induced Buckingham to liken him to a butcher's

cur, by which he probably meant either a mastiff or a bulldog. The real Wolsey—unless he is much belied—although he could be a crafty courtier, on occasion, rarely laid aside the arrogance commonly associated with the upstart. And this attitude was lacking in the composition of Irving's Wolsey, which was keen, imperious, inflexible, unscrupulous, sardonic, and capable, but not massive. It had not the dogged and unhesitant impulse denoted in the text and in Wolsey's bull-like front and heavy jowl. Sometimes it was curiously suggestive of Mephistopheles playing priest for his purposes. But it was consistent with itself, thoroughly artistic in design, and executed with infinite delicacy of finish. Altogether it was a great performance and a fascinating portrait, notably free from the actor's most aggravating eccentricities. In the closing scenes it was finely pathetic.

The Katharine of Ellen Terry excelled expectation. It had not the somber touch of tragedy that should ennoble it, but it was womanly to the core and thoroughly royal in deportment. In the trial scene her appeal to the King was delivered with beautiful sincerity, and her rebuke to the Cardinal, if not electric, was exceedingly effective. In the interview with the two Cardinals she displayed an unwonted amount of dra-

matic energy, and her death scene was deeply moving, without any excess of painful realism. Considering the fact that the part lay outside her histrionic frontiers, she must be credited with an artistic triumph. The King of Terriss was a clever effort, boisterous rather than strong, and lacking in spontaneous choler, but virile and picturesque. The general representation set a standard which is not likely to be attained, or approached, in the near future.*

Two years later Mr. Irving, greatly daring, produced "Macbeth." As an artistic, able, and conscientious manager he more than justified his reputation; as an actor he demonstrated his insufficiency in parts of the highest tragic import. Pictorially his representation of the tragedy was the most imaginative and impressive of modern times. The weird sisters, for the first time in many a weary year, became unearthly in their vague surroundings of elemental confusion and terror. Never substantial—like the ragged scarecrows that so often have excited derision—they came and vanished in the air, ghastly vocal shadows, outlined in sulphurous fumes by flashes of lightning to accompaniments of crashing thunder. They delivered their lines with all proper emphasis and appropriately wild gesture. The caul-

* It has not been approached yet (June, 1916).

dron, no longer a gypsy soup-kettle, was a crater in a mountain top, from whose rugged jaws the apparitions rose with slow solemnity, to utter their oracles with due reverence for meter and text. Hecate soared in space with the chorus of her invisible attendants floating around her in melodious echoes. The mortal incidents were presented with equal tact and comprehension. One striking picture was that of old Duncan at the head of his court, listening to the story of the wounded sergeant, while the bystanders discussed the news of the battle. Another was the reception of the King at the entrance to Macbeth's castle, where the train of princes, nobles, and soldiers made a gallant show, as, with waving tartans and shining steel, they followed their aged monarch and his smiling hostess, to be swallowed up in the recesses behind those frowning portals. Yet a third was the banquet hall with its long row of guests and its simple and novel arrangement of tables, by which the chair of the murdered Banquo and the raised platform of the King and Queen were brought into the same line of vision. The Ghost itself did not appear in bodily form, but was represented only by a gleam of light upon the vacant seat, a device that left more scope to the imagination and was infinitely preferable to the conventional gashed and all too

manifestly solid specter. The closing scenes, around the castle of Dunsinane, with their glimpses of savage areas beneath dark and threatening skies, touched here and there with the fires of an angry sunset, with rushes of armed men across the shadows, were in the nicest harmony with the spirit of the tragedy.

With a Macbeth of heroic dimensions the representation would have marked an epoch in theatrical history. Unfortunately, this was wanting. In no other character that he assumed did Henry Irving give such free rein to the eccentricities which marred so many of his most ambitious efforts. He was plainly overweighted. Conscious, perhaps, of his inability to impersonate the heroical elements of the character, he relied upon his own extraordinary capacity for the delineation of the physical symptoms of rage, fear and despair in a cowardly and guilty soul. His Macbeth was a degenerate, not only depraved but contemptible, a creature so weak as to be incapable of meditating a bold and ambitious stroke, let alone executing it. His conception of the part, in itself inadmissible, was made yet more futile by the frequent incomprehensibility of his utterance. In some of his more passionate scenes he might just as well have been talking Volapük. To the eye his acting was often vividly

suggestive and illuminative. The play of his features as he listened to the promptings of his wife and his own evil genius, his significant gestures and rapt expression while tracing the flight of the air-drawn dagger, his terror at the Ghost, and his agony of despair as he realized the juggling of the fiends, were marvels of pantomimic skill. His bearing was instinct with picturesque horror, but the criminal he impersonated was of far baser fiber than Macbeth. Ellen Terry's assumption of the guilty Queen was intelligent and intelligible, but she was wholly out of her depth.

Mr. Irving made ample amends for the comparative fiasco of his Macbeth when he presented the "King Arthur" of Comyns Carr. This was a notable essay in the cause of romantic drama. In risking comparison with Tennyson's "Idyls of the King," Mr. Carr was somewhat adventurous, but he passed the ordeal with credit. His play was not a great one, but it was written in fluent, graceful, and often imaginative verse, told an interesting story, and offered opportunities for spectacular illustration of which Mr. Irving, of course, did not fail to avail himself. He would have been wiser, perhaps, if he had not attempted quite so much, if he had confined himself to some of the more familiar episodes in the Arthurian legends, instead of trying to cover

HENRY IRVING
as "Cardinal Wolsey"

© Window & Grove, London.

ELLEN TERRY
as "Queen Katharine"

"HENRY VIII"

the whole period—from Arthur's acquirement of Excalibur to his death—but he succeeded in producing one of the most notable poetic dramas of recent years. As Arthur, Henry Irving was seen at his best. The plot was one in which his intellect and imagination had free play and in which no excessive demand was made upon his physical resources. His impersonation was at once dignified, romantic, and human, full of spiritual elevation, lofty resolution, superb courtesy, exquisite tenderness, and complete devotion. Few executive flaws dimmed the beauty of the design. His voice was resonant, his elocution crisp, and the rhythm of his delivery generally admirable. Had he not, on many occasions, demonstrated his elocutionary skill, so much insistence upon his frequent eccentricities in utterance would scarcely have been justifiable. His acting in the prologue, at the magic mere, left little to be desired. His carriage had distinction, his gesture was bold, free, and majestic, and his enunciation perfect. He fully maintained this high level of excellence through the first act, in the gallantry of his bearing toward the Queen, in the kingliness of his reception and dismissal of the Knights, and in the trustful simplicity of his love for Lancelot. At the supreme moment of the revelation of Guinevere's infidelity, his acting

was exceedingly forceful and pathetic. Mortal anguish and heroic endurance were signified in every line of his anguished and rigid face and in every note of his grave and measured speech. The death scene, with its noble resignation, was a fitting climax to a consistently fine, romantic, and dramatic achievement. There were depths in Guinevere which Ellen Terry could not fathom, but she made a lovely and gracious figure. Her suggestion, in the early scenes with the King, of the struggle in her heart between love and duty was very delicate and subtle, and her beguilement of Lancelot into a confession of his guilty passion was a charming bit of feminine artifice, while her culminating avalanche of womanly feeling was finely sincere and spontaneous. In the rendezvous of the lovers in the wood the ardor of Lancelot, beside hers, glowed with but a pale fire. The dignity and courage she displayed in repulsing the traitor, Mordred, in the prison, were altogether queenlike.

Toward the end of his memorable career, Henry Irving delighted his admirers with two little studies—little more than thumbnail sketches—which for pure artistry must be accounted among his happier achievements. The first in order was that of Don Quixote in a two-act piece by W. G. Wills, which actually was a bit of ex-

travaganza. With the immortal satire of Cervantes it had only the most shadowy connection. Much of it was mere horseplay, but Irving made of the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance a portrait worthy of a much more dignified and permanent setting. Physically—the resources of art emphasizing some natural qualifications—the actor presented an almost ideal embodiment of this famous conception. The lean, gaunt, angular frame, the grave and wasted visage, the solemn, almost sepulchral, dignity of voice and carriage were reproduced with startling fidelity—as if, by some miracle, one of Doré's studies had been brought to life—but all this was simply the result of mimetic art. The real greatness of the impersonation consisted in the lofty, fanatical spirit with which the grotesque, but never ridiculous, figure was illumined and ennobled. There were traces of this spirit in Irving's finely imagined Malvolio, but in his Don Quixote it burned with infinitely more brightness and power.

The ludicrous externals of his poor, distraught knight, all denoted with realistic accuracy, became deeply pathetic in the light of his intense conviction, his superb vanity, his courtesy exquisite in spite of its extravagance, the genuine tenderness and dauntless chivalry underlying his crazy demeanor. The comic and the sad were mingled so

dexterously in this fragment of artistic mockery, especially in the opening scenes, that the spectator scarcely knew whether to pay it the tribute of laughter or tears. Of its surpassing merit as acting, wholly apart from the inspiration in the design, there can be no question. Throughout the player maintained his grip upon the character, with undeviating consistency, whether inditing a letter to Dulcinea, reading some romantic legend, unfolding his plans of campaign, or running a tilt against the pump which did duty for a windmill. The impersonation was an histrionic gem.

Worthy to mate with it was Irving's picture of the nonagenarian corporal who had won a medal at Waterloo for driving a powder wagon through a wall of fire. For this opportunity he was indebted to the pen of Conan Doyle. The piece itself was a trifle, but clever in its swift summary of the penalties of extreme old age—even when most vigorous—the loss of memory and nerve, the querulousness, garrulity, selfishness, and loneliness accompanying it. Mr. Irving, as the old soldier, made a study of the homeliest realism, which was in the broadest possible contrast with his idealistic portrait of the Don. Marvelously "made up" he filled in Dr. Doyle's outlines with minute, almost painful veracity,

with innumerable touches of grim humor and simple pathos, and with an infallible sense of theatrical effect. In all the details of senile speech and action his study was one of pre-Raphaelite precision. The very filling of his pipe was effected with a delicate byplay prompted by the closest observation. In a hundred little ways he made the embodiment vital. His interest in a passing regiment, his amazement at a modern breech-loader, and the instinctive but futile efforts to rise briskly to attention upon the entrance of a superior officer were instances in point. His performance was full of patriotic and sympathetic appeal, and ended with a most thrilling effect. The old man, who, unnoticed, had fallen into a doze, began dreaming of his Waterloo exploit. After a few uneasy motions, he sprang erect and soldierlike to his feet, with the passionate cry, "The guards want powder, and, by God, they shall have it!" and then fell back dead. The power which Mr. Irving put into this climax was electric.

Some mention must be made of "Robespierre," which Sardou, in his later days, made for Henry Irving. As an illustration of a period it was superior to "Thermidor," "Madame Sans Gêne," "Théodora," "Cleopatra," "Gismonda," and other tailor-made pieces to which the illustrious

Frenchman devoted his learning and ingenuity for commercial purposes, but its value was almost purely theatrical. His selection of Robespierre as a possible vehicle for Irving was characteristically astute. A character compounded of the most contradictory moral and intellectual attributes, a man who was at once timid and audacious, bloodthirsty and philanthropic, tenderhearted and remorseless, a lofty patriot and unscrupulous tyrant, a patron of the arts and a demagogic politician, a poet of sentiment and purveyor-general to the guillotine, was susceptible of dramatic development in any direction and adaptable to almost any conceivable dramatic situation. So he boldly made him the hero of an early love romance and endowed him with a vast latent fund of paternal affection. This was to impart to him the human interest in which he was deficient. Then he made him the dominant figure in incidents closely akin to those in which Irving had won fame in "The Bells," "Eugene Aram," "Louis XI.," and kindred plays. Irving had only to repeat himself, and this he did, with his usual ability and his most familiar extravagances. His performance was effective, often theatrically brilliant, but it could not in any true sense be called a new creation. But the scenic spectacle which he pre-

sented was superb and his stage management as unimpeachable as ever.

Ellen Terry won a personal triumph in 1889 by her performance of Ellaline, the heroine of Alfred C. Calmour's poetic play, "The Amber Heart." This is a dainty, fanciful, allegorical little piece, with a minimum of dramatic substance. The story is of a lovely maiden, guarded against love by an amulet which she throws away. Left defenseless, she is wooed, won, and betrayed, whereupon she meditates suicide, but, recovering her amulet, is restored to happiness. The charm is wholly imaginative, poetical, and sympathetic, and would miscarry hopelessly in the hands of almost any other actress than Miss Terry. With her delicate art she endowed Ellaline with all the buoyancy and ingenuous simplicity of the freshest maidenhood. The slightest hint of affectation or dissimulation would have been ruinous. But her light-hearted, frank, and guileless girlishness was so natural, her manner so sprightly, free, and joyous, that it was easy to believe in the efficacy of her amulet. Nothing could be prettier than her revelation of the dawn of love in her breast, or more winning than her impulsive but modest surrender to the ardent Silvio. Equally natural was her denotement of the silent suffering of a proud but gentle heart when she found herself neglected and forsaken.

Her appeal to her recreant lover was most moving in its reproachfulness, and the unselfishness of it was admirably emphasized by the flash of womanly passion provoked by the taunts of her successful and ungenerous rival. Few, indeed, are the actresses of to-day who could hope to embody a conception so fanciful—a bit of dreamland—with a skill so sympathetic, delicate, deft, and sure.

Well do I remember the attitude of some of our commercial managers toward Henry Irving when he first came to this country. They said that he was a novelty which had been well advertised; a charlatan whose tricks made him notorious; a showman whose lavish expenditures would soon bring him to ruin. They changed their tune after a season or two, when he continued to draw crowded houses, while their own theaters were comparatively empty. But they never learned to profit by the supreme lesson he taught them, which, as I take it, is that the theater run most consistently upon artistic principles, is in the end most commercially prosperous. It is true that in his last years his fortunes, not his reputation, temporarily declined somewhat, owing to sickness, misfortune, miscalculation, and other causes. But from the moment that he first took up the reins of manage-

ment he increased steadily in artistic fame and riches. The secret of his success is an open one. He had a rooted faith in the dignity, the significance, the artistic universality, and the weighty responsibilities of his profession.

To him the theater was the handmaid of all the arts. To him a play, if it was worth doing at all, was worth doing in the best possible manner. I do not believe that he was greatly concerned about the moral or—except from the artistic point of view—the educational influence of the stage. He was not altogether exempt from the egoism which so often warps the judgment of the actor-manager, and it would be folly to pretend that he was indifferent to the receipts in his box-office. Beyond question he was fully alive to the attractive powers of sensational incident and spectacle. Not all his plays rose to the same high level of literary and dramatic excellence. His supreme confidence in his own histrionic genius not infrequently led him to undertake characters, such as Macbeth, Romeo, Othello, and Coriolanus, for which he was unfitted, while his determination to be first or nowhere prevented him from producing plays in which he might have been outshone, and from assuming comparatively subordinate parts for which he was preeminently qualified.

He never, for instance, produced "As You Like It," although he often talked of doing so, because, as he said, he could not make up his mind whether to play Touchstone or Jacques. It can scarcely be doubted, in the light of his actual accomplishment, that his interpretation of either character would have been an intellectual treat which would have added infinitely to the value of the representation, while it is virtually certain that Ellen Terry would have proved the ideal Rosalind of this era.

Many good actors have played Touchstone during the last forty or fifty years; half a dozen, perhaps, with genuine intuition; others with infectious humor, but not one of them is now remembered for preeminent success in the part. It is tolerably safe to say that, within living memory, no player has realized fully upon the stage the charm which this most delightful of Shakespeare's clowns exerts upon the printed page. Most of his interpreters, not unwisely, have contented themselves with keeping very closely to the lines of old theatrical traditions. For these Irving, who was seldom imitative, probably would have had small reverence. Right or wrong, he would have been guided in his conception by his own impulses and intellect. The mere fact that he meditated the assumption of

a subordinate part is virtually proof that he had original ideas concerning it. Very likely the result might have been strange, beyond all possibility of doubt it would have been profoundly interesting and suggestive. He had the brains, the inventiveness, and the authority (a great advantage) to give new significance and clarity to obscure or difficult phrases, and the artistry (inasmuch as the part lay wholly within his physical resources) to insure a completely harmonious study. Moreover, his impersonation would have been charged with all the dynamics of his own extraordinary personality. In Jacques, he would have found a superb opportunity for the display of his ironic humor, but for little else. In Touchstone, he might have been *facile primus*. In any case, if he failed, he would have failed brilliantly.

For the remaining parts his company would have supplied an insuperable cast, and it is tantalizing to think of the scenic loveliness and the romantic glamor with which his managerial skill and sure artistic instinct would have invested that exquisite pastoral comedy. This was one of his lost opportunities, and it was one that Phelps would never have missed. Irving, be it noted, never labored under the delusion that a leading actor rose in popular estimation by virtue of his

manifest superiority over incompetent associates, or that a good play was always its own sufficient vindication in the theater. He had his failures, but none of them was on account of indifferent representation. His stock company, collected with care and kept together by liberal treatment and constant employment, was for many years the best in existence and was reinforced by the best available material as occasion required.

For his scenery he employed artists of renown, and, to insure the proper atmosphere and accuracy in detail, he summoned to their aid eminent experts in costume, architecture, and archeology. For his modern plays he went, for the most part, not to hacks, but to authors of established literary repute. In rehearsals he was incessant and indefatigable. Well served, he was in all things director in chief, a fact that accounts for the unity in purpose and design that distinguished all his representations and speaks volumes for his individual capacity. He owed much, doubtless, to the long and arduous apprenticeship which he served in various stock companies before he got his foot on the first rung of the ladder, but more to his own indomitable ambition and energy. He was among the great ones of mankind. Not a scholar or student, he had an intellectual keenness and avidity that enabled

him to absorb and assimilate all sorts of useful learning from his experience and the eminent men in all walks of life, whose intimacy he cultivated assiduously, and who were proud to acknowledge him as their friend. The strange charm of his manner, his knowledge of the world, his shrewd and caustic comment, his prodigal liberality as a host, and his self-respect and discretion won for him a social position to which few actors before him had attained. This, perhaps, was not the least of his many services to his profession. Half a dozen men of his stamp would do more to renovate the theater than all the dilettante committees that can be organized. Almost an ideal manager, he showed how to elevate the theater and at the same time make it pay by treating it seriously. He died too soon and left no successor behind him.

XXI

RICHARD MANSFIELD

Of a very different type from Henry Irving was Richard Mansfield, and yet there were some striking similarities between the two men. Both had strong individualities, burning ambition, intense egotism, and high artistic instinct. In both the creative or interpretative faculty was hampered and limited by the ingrained habits of an inexorable personality. Both believed themselves equal to the loftiest flights of tragic emotion, ignoring the limitations of which, perhaps, they were unconscious, and both underrated the exceptional abilities with which they were endowed. Irving, of course, was the greater actor, the finer character, and the more nimble and apprehensive intellect of the two. In the hard school of experience he acquired a wisdom, an adaptability, and a self-control which Mansfield never learned. To the last the latter was imperious, wilful, self-centered, and indocile. He was a terror to his managers.

Concerning the brilliancy of his natural talents

there can be no dispute. He inherited a large share of them from his mother, Madame Rudersdorf, one of the greatest dramatic singers of her day, and a most capable and headstrong woman. He was musical, sang beautifully, painted with skill, and was a good linguist. I would not hesitate to accredit him with genius were it not for the indefiniteness of a word so profligately misused. Genius, in the sense of an uncommon development of the mimetic and artistic faculties, he undoubtedly had, but not in any superlative degree. His manner, on the stage and off, was apt to be stiff, precise, and angular, but, nevertheless there was about his presence a certain forcefulness—a suggestion of latent power—that concentrated attention and excited interest. His voice was deep, resonant, and musical—few actors have been gifted with a finer organ—but he never learned to take full advantage of it, adopting a falling inflection ending upon the same note at every period, which soon wearied the ear, and was especially fatal in the delivery of blank verse.

I have referred briefly to the remarkable performance of the Baron Chevrial in "A Parisian Romance," in the Union Square Theater, which first brought him prominently into public notice. Hitherto he had been identified chiefly with light

dramatic pieces and comic opera—he won praise as Sir Joseph Porter in "H. M. S. Pinafore"—and this realistic exhibition of depravity in dotage, by a young and comparatively unknown actor, was a surprise to the public, the managers, and the critics, and soon became a town topic. It was an extraordinarily clever bit of work, and deserved nearly all the praise that it received. The assumption of senility, aping youth, an ancient satyr with a veneer of superfine polish, of a lust *lassata necdum satiata,* was almost as fascinating as it was horrible. And the picture of the death stroke, paralyzing an infamous hilarity, was vivid and startling in the extreme. It was a wonderful piece of mimicry, but it was not a great performance, because no great power of emotion or imagination was involved. It could not be compared for a moment with the effect wrought by such actors as Edwin Booth, E. L. Davenport, or Samuel Phelps in the collapse of Sir Giles Overreach. But it saved a poor play from disaster, and made the actor, who had been so prompt in seizing his opportunity, famous.

The part was prominent in his repertory for many years, but in expanding and over-elaborating it he spoiled his own performance. He had, however, established his reputation as an interpreter of eccentric character, and it was for his

proficiency in this line that he will be longest remembered. When Steele Mackaye produced his "In Spite of All"—a variation upon Sardou's "Andrea"—Mansfield furnished a most telling sketch of a theatrical manager of German extraction. It was a veritable characterization, in which all the details of speech, appearance, and manner were nicely appropriate, and he maintained the illusion most successfully, until the action of the scene called for a manifestation of emotional pathos, when he broke down, his acting being devoid of all sincerity.

Soon afterward he appeared as the hero of "Prince Karl," written for him by A. C. Gunter. The piece itself was unmitigated rubbish. It was all about a Prince who, having proposed marriage to one woman, makes love to another, whom he has discovered to be richer, in the guise of his own courier. In it Mr. Mansfield won much popularity. He played the Prince in the light vein of eccentric comedy in which he excelled, and was particularly happy in his broken English, in his snatches of song, and his adoption of a foreign manner. But here again he was least satisfactory in his interpretation of passages of romantic sentiment, demanding some measure of emotional sincerity. Even in these early days it was apparent to experienced observers that

the fervor of romantic ardor and the poignancy of true pathos were beyond his means of expression.

Mansfield advanced still further in public favor in a melodramatic version of the "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" of Robert Louis Stevenson. The play reproduced some of the leading incidents of the story and some of the text, but very little of its spirit, significance, and power. As for the performance of Mr. Mansfield of the double personality, that was full of melodramatic effect and theatrical strokes, but showed very little sympathetic imagination. It was in the externals that gratify the crowd, not in the clairvoyance of a perfect intelligence, that it excelled. Jekyll he represented as a young, sallow, melancholy student, with cleanly shaven face, very dark and heavy eyebrows, and long, black hair. Far from being the jovial, debonair man of the world, he was haunted by the terrors of his position, a sort of Hamlet in a frock coat. Hyde he made a nightmare of goblin hideousness, a white, leering vampire, with a ferocious mouth and glazing eyes, deformed, lame, palsied, and infirm. A loathsome object, certainly, and, to a certain extent, like a medieval demon, suggestive of evil, but not half so appalling or infernal as the shrivelled Hyde of the original, with his horrible

lightness, activity, and energy, impressing the observer with a sense of a deformity which did not actually exist. The subtleties of this creation eluded Mansfield completely. For an imaginative symbolism—in which Irving, who once meditated playing the character, would have revelled—he could only substitute something grossly palpable and material. He utterly failed to denote that one character was supplemental to the other. Essentially the difference between his two men was physical.

The moroseness and gloom of Jekyll had much in common with the sullen ferocity of Hyde. By making Jekyll buoyant and convivial, as he is expressly described in the book, he would have prepared a much finer and more artistic dramatic contrast. That he showed much acting power in illustrating his grotesque idea of Hyde, I fully acknowledge, but it was not of an inspired kind. J. B. Studley, and others of the old Bowery melodramatic days, could have done as much. He was at his best in his scene with Dr. Lanyon, where, after getting the drugs, Hyde taunts him with his incredulity and curiosity At this juncture there was a dash of the demoniacal in his voice and gesture, but the double impersonation, as a whole, evinced no astonishing amount of intuition, or genuine versatility, and was wholly un-

worthy of the rhapsodical encomiums lavished upon it. Some of the critics seem to have accepted the commonest of theatrical tricks as unprecedented miracles.

Throughout his career Mansfield suffered greatly at the hands of his devoted worshipers. He was bepraised with an ecstatical oratory that would have been fulsome if Garrick, Salvini, or Booth had been the subject of it. As a natural consequence he was subjected to unnecessary and cruel comparisons, and often measured by standards wholly disproportionate to his inches. For him, as for Charles Kean, the only true form of criticism was adulation, and this betrayed him into some lamentable mistakes. His "Richard III," first produced in London and Boston, was hailed as one of the most splendid achievements of modern managerial art and a presentation instinct with the Shakespearean spirit. It is only fair to say at once that the scenic production was a very fine one—not better than many of Irving's, not so good as some—but wholly admirable in its excellent painting, its rich and accurate dressing, its well-drilled supernumeraries and its solid architecture.

As for the Shakespearean spirit, it was virtually the old Cibberian compound. It began with the murder of Henry VI, and omitted the whole

Clarence episode and the scenes in which Queen Elizabeth, Queen Margaret, and Rivers are concerned. It omitted the first, third, and fourth scenes of the second act and a great part of the fourth act. The later acts were cut with equal freedom, scenes were transposed, and the spurious text was employed much as usual. There was nothing very heinous in all this, nothing for which there was not abundant precedent, but the misrepresentations extensively circulated in relation to it were unnecessary, dishonest, and absurdly foolish. Poor Mansfield was not responsible, of course, for much of the blatant nonsense published about him by his press agents and correspondents of the penny-a-liner breed. He may have winced a little if he ever read the assertion that his Richard was the best since the days of Edmund Kean—and that with Edwin Booth still in the field.

Actually his Richard was a forcible-feeble affair, a cheap, conventional portrait set in a magnificent frame. He may justly be held responsible for his contemptuous disregard of his own prompt book. In a preface to this he declared that inasmuch as Shakespeare had libelled Richard unscrupulously and exaggerated his deformity as he had his crimes, he had determined to treat that deformity lightly. Nevertheless, he

wore a hump like a camel, and tottered and limped in a manner totally inconsistent with the strength and agility of which the usurper is known to have been possessed. With similar irrelevance, after describing Gloster's face as "mournful almost to pathos," he presented him as a hang-dog looking, beetle-browed fellow, whose face suggested nothing but a dull malignity. Of the devilish alertness, keen intelligence, courtly habit, native authority, all vital elements of the character, he intimated nothing. His hypocrisy was not so much a veil for his thoughts as a medium for their revelation. Preeminently, the dominant feature of his performance was a labored theatricalism, unenlightened by divination. His entrance into King Henry's chamber in the tower, his studied pause upon the threshold, his warming of his hands at the fire, the careful arrangement of his pose against the wall at the head of the King's bed, his deliberate drawing of his sword, and the testing of the tip exhibited a calculated mechanism in which there was no quiver of life or emotion. He passed his sword through the body of his victim with the nonchalance of a poulterer skewering a fowl, and wiped his sword upon the curtain with the same passionless indifference. His intent, doubtless, was to signify remorseless resolution and unshakable nerve, but

he failed utterly to suggest the energy of the direful will below the icy surface. It was clever pantomime, but purely melodramatic, not tragic. All was mere action without informing soul.

A similar straining after theatrical effect was noticeable when he spoke his opening soliloquy in the second act squatting like a toad upon a stone by the wayside. The attitude was inappropriate and undignified, and the delivery without significance or variety. In the wooing of the Lady Anne he was more satisfactory, audacity and cynicism being deftly blended with an air of affected sincerity. But the soliloquy, "Was ever woman," etc., was a direct harangue to the audience, shouted out in varying degrees of loudness, without light or shade, a wretchedly bald and unimaginative recitation, without a trace of the triumphant mockery and satanic exultation with which Edwin Booth used to fill it.

His denunciation of Hastings was noisy and overwrought, and in the encounter of wits with the little Duke of York he betrayed his discomfiture in starts and scowls which ill became so accomplished a hypocrite, while in the scene with the Lord Mayor, and of the offer of the crown, he indulged in extravagances which won some cheap applause, indeed, but came perilously close to burlesque. It is needless to multiply instances

of this kind—they were continuous in the performance. But one device was too illustrative of the spirit of the performance to be disregarded. As Richard assumed his throne a ray of red light was thrown upon his hand. This presently became green, as if to show the King in a new complexion. It was upon such tricks as these that Mr. Mansfield put his main dependence. The impersonation, considered as the work of an ambitious and unqualified novice, was not without its compensating merits, but as a study of Shakespearean character it was hopelessly commonplace. In later years it improved somewhat, but not much. It never rose above the level of the second rate.

From Shakespeare Mr. Mansfield plunged boldly downward to Simms and Pettit. Words would be wasted even in the briefest description of such miserable trash as "Master and Man." In it he depicted a villainous hunchback, whose accumulated crimes against innocent virtue finally prompted his neighbors to bake him in the furnace of a foundry. This bit of the grotesque he enacted with vividness and enthusiasm, employing some of the most lurid effects of his Hyde and Richard and adding others. In the furnace scene his portrayal of abject, shrieking, convulsive terror was exceedingly well done, with an

amazing display of physical vigor. But, of course, such a part did not require any uncommon ability.

He next appeared in a character which afforded him a much better opportunity for artistic work, Beau Brummell, which proved one of his most popular impersonations. The play was the invention of the ingenious and prolific Clyde Fitch and was a poor affair. Anxious to fit Mr. Mansfield with a neat dramatic suit, he endowed the Beau with generosity, deep emotions, heroic capacity for self-sacrifice, and other virtues completely foreign to his nature, thus making the shallow, foppish, selfish side of him wholly incomprehensible. Brummell really was a worthless creature, a sort of confidence man of a refined type, with a superficial gloss of elegant manner—the polish, as it were, upon the brass which was his principal constituent. In this piece he is an altruist who sacrifices love and fortune for the sake of a favorite nephew and retires to dignified exile, solitude, and starvation. This version, however, provides for the one original, imaginative, and effective scene in the play, in which the starving exquisite, dreaming of his former state, dines luxuriously off phantom dishes, while entertaining old companions conjured up by his delirium.

In this closing episode, well suited to his ironic humor and mimetic skill, Mansfield played with admirable delicacy, humor, and feeling, but he was not so entirely successful as might have been expected in the more characteristic Brummellian scene of the opening act. The invincible stiffness and angularity of his manner, to which I have alluded previously, militated against his perfect assumption of the graceful, if formal, elegance which distinguished the fop of the period, when people stood in the streets to see the "First Gentleman in Europe" take off his hat. Spontaneity and suppleness of action he never could acquire. The graces of gesture and diction, although his voice was singularly powerful and melodious, always eluded him. But the air of indolent indifference, imperturbable composure, languid boredom, and quiet insolence he caught without difficulty, and his execution was admirable in its deliberation, smoothness, and finish. The impudent speeches so often quoted as witty (every available anecdote historical or apocryphal, is embalmed in the play) he spoke very neatly. It was a clever performance, with a great deal more of Mr. Mansfield in it than of Beau Brummell, and this fact, probably, contributed not a little to its prolonged popularity.

It is scarcely worth while to dwell upon his ap-

pearance in "Don Juan," an amateurish piece, crude in matter and form, which he wrote for himself. It probably represented his own estimate of his dramatic aptitudes and was a curious instance of self-deception. In the earlier acts, mainly farcical, the Don was exhibited in a variety of his youthful escapades. The last act, melodramatic, showed him in prison, wounded and dying, but still invincible. The first scenes needed lightness, fervor, gayety, and grace, in all of which he was deficient, while the last acts were of a quality which the best of acting could not have redeemed. Nor was he much more fortunate when he undertook to embody the Rev. Arthur Dimmesdale in a not very brilliant adaptation which Joseph Hatton had made out of "The Scarlet Letter." His impersonation was devoid of almost every attribute ascribed to the original by his creator.

Instead of being fragile, spiritual, intellectual, eloquent, emotional, hectic, and interesting, he was stolid, sneaking, animal, and Dutch. To the eye he was heavy and dyspeptic; to the ear a droning monotone. His delivery was one everlasting preachment. After these experiments, with characteristic audacity, he ventured to challenge comparison with Edwin Booth by appearing as Shylock. The attempt was attended by a

considerable measure of success. He mounted the comedy tastefully, and gave it a fairly good cast. In the Jew he found a part which, according to his reading of it, lay largely within his histrionic boundaries. His impersonation was full of crudities, violence, and inconsistencies, but it gave a promise, never fulfilled, of better things thereafter. It made no pretense of racial or personal dignity, but, except in the second act, was conceived along the lines of low cunning and malevolence, to which he gave vital expression. Some of his bursts of passion, although more vociferous than eloquent, were, nevertheless, effective, and much of his byplay was full of meaning. His farewell to Jessica was an excellent piece of acting—well imagined and wrought—but it was out of harmony with much that had gone before and came after. At no point did the performance show more than ordinary intelligence or any sign of inspiration. Some of the laudations lavished upon it have long been a source to me of utter bewilderment.

Mansfield was in his own proper province when, abandoning the poetic drama, he appeared as the hero of Bernard Shaw's sparkling extravaganza "Arms and the Man." Of this he grasped the humor intuitively, acting with a simple sincerity too often missing in his more

ambitious work. He succeeded in identifying himself with the mercenary soldier, devoid of enthusiasm, patriotism, heroism, or any other positive quality, except self-interest and an involuntary habitual truthfulness, often as disconcerting to himself as to others. His stolid imperturbability, his deliberate speech, and quizzical manner were capital, and his whole impersonation, in its humor and finish, did more to justify his reputation than anything he had offered to the public for a long time. His Napoleon, in a disconnected episodical panorama put together by Lorimer Stoddard, was a clever bit of mimicry without much dramatic significance of any kind. Admirably made up he impersonated the Emperor in triumph at Tilsit, in dejection after the Russian campaign, at Elba, on the eve of Waterloo, and dying at St. Helena.

The views he gave were wholly conventional, but he suggested, skilfully enough, some of the leading traits of the great Corsican, his swift comprehension, prompt decision, rapidity in action, and superb self-reliance. But no real study of the character was involved in this exhibition. "The King of Peru," by Louis Napoleon Parker, which he produced in 1895, deserved a larger amount of public attention than it received. It was a very clever pseudo-historical social sa-

tire, with an interesting story and a wholesome moral. The idea of it was borrowed from the "Rois en Exil" of Daudet. Mansfield had the part of a royal pretender who held his mimic court in a lodging-house in Soho. The adventurers about him induced him to marry a rich heiress, who adored him, with the view of getting her money and nullifying the marriage should the exile ever become King. After the money has been spent the hero realizes the meanness of the plot in which he has been involved, abjures all royal pretensions, and resolves to support his wife by working honestly for a living. The play was a good one from every point of view and the selection of it did credit to Mansfield's discernment and artistic taste. In many ways the leading character was peculiarly well suited to his temperament and capacities, and in the later acts he played it with skill and thorough comprehension. In the scene of his abasement he displayed both passion and pathos, and in his final renunciation he was manly, dignified, and tender. If the rest of his performance had been equally good, he might have achieved a genuine triumph, but in the opening scenes his stilted pomposity fell little short of the ridiculous. Few actors could be more interesting and attractive than he when at his best, still fewer more exasperating when he was at his worst.

Not long afterward he won an artistic, if not popular, success in "Rodion the Student," an adaptation by C. H. Meltzer from the "Crime and Punishment" of Dostoievsky. The opening acts were ordinary melodrama, but the last three, showing the remorse of the murderer, his dread of self-betrayal, the horrible fascination that ever drew him to the place of his crime, and his final collapse, were of far superior quality. It was in these later introspective scenes that Mansfield did his best work. Up to the murder his acting was forced, rigid, and mechanical, but his portrayal of the tortures of a guilty conscience working upon a nervous system, already wrought to the verge of madness, was exceedingly vivid, and in one scene of frenzied delirium, in which he reenacted the murder in dumb show, grappling in imagination with the shade of his victim, he stirred the spectators to a high pitch of enthusiasm. The simulation of extreme terror is not in itself difficult, but at this juncture the acting of Mr. Mansfield evinced imagination as well as executive power. His next essay was in an old-fashioned melodrama called "Castle Sombras," which may be left to oblivion. In it he played a gloomy hero, of the Byronic type, with indifferent success. Nor need I linger over "The First Violin," a pretty little romantic play in

which he was much more happily placed. It was remotely akin, in general character, to "Prince Karl," and the part of the hero lay well within the scope of his varied abilities, and was not in direct conflict with his personal mannerisms. In it he was long and deservedly successful.

It was in 1898 that Mansfield, with characteristic boldness and artistic ambition, effected one of his most notable representations, that of Edmond Rostand's brilliant romantic and literary fantasy, "Cyrano de Bergerac," in the English version of Howard Thayer Kingsbury. His individual performance, taking it for all in all, was one of his most memorable achievements. I do not propose to attempt here any synopsis or review of a play that has been so frequently described and discussed, but wish to record my personal conviction that the part of Cyrano as conceived by its creator has never been fully embodied in this country, not even by Coquelin, for whom it was originally designed. It is one of extraordinary difficulty, because of the blend in it of the ideally romantic and the visibly grotesque.

The problem before the actor is to make the facial malformity of the man sufficiently prominent to account for its consequences, and, at the

same time, to bring into full relief the precious jewels of character contained in that unpromising casket. I think that Mansfield, out of overconscientiousness, perhaps, made a great mistake and subjected himself to an unnecessary handicap in wearing a snout like that of a tapir, long, flexible, hideous, possibly comic, but inhuman, which dwarfed not only every other feature, but the head and countenance, virtually annihilating all power of facial expression. This was an especially serious deprivation to an actor so weak in oratorical expedient. At first Mansfield trusted too much to his comic vein, his behavior and carriage scarcely justifying the prompt acquiescence of so distinguished an assemblage in the authority of his self-constituted censorship. His faulty elocution prevented him from doing much with the ballade, punctuated by his rapier thrusts.

In the bakery scene with Roxane, when he mistakes the confession of her love for Christian for an avowal to himself, his sudden change from an attitude of ecstatic anticipation to one of bitter but sternly repressed disappointment was admirable acting. In his explosive outbursts of rage at the insults of the incomprehensive Christian, there were flashes of the right fire. He came near to genuine eloquence in the bal-

cony episode, where he pleads the cause of his rival, but his treatment of the following passage, where he delays the amorous Duke in the courtyard, savored of burlesque. In the camp and battle scenes of the fourth act he bore himself with soldierly gallantry, but it was in the final act, where the dying Cyrano, loyally concealing his own hurt, betrays his secret to Roxane by his fervid recitation of the letter which he is supposed never to have seen, that he seemed suddenly to seize the soul of the character, acting with a fervor, simplicity, and unaffected manliness which touched the heart and quickened the pulse. Rarely had he created so fine an effect. His death, too, on his feet, hurling a last defiance against the foes he had always fought, was a worthy realization of the brilliant fancy of the poet. The whole impersonation was one to which a sincere tribute of hearty praise may be gladly given.

Two years later, Mr. Mansfield put Shakespeare's "Henry V" upon the stage with a scenic completeness and splendor worthy of Irving himself. The throne room at Westminster, with its matchless roof; the quay at Southampton; the intrenchments at Harfleur; the English lines at Agincourt, and the Cathedral at Troyes were pictures that have seldom been surpassed upon

the stage. The supporting cast was of level and respectable capacity. All the accessories reflected credit upon his managerial liberality and his artistic taste. But, unfortunately, the driving force needed to give animation and dramatic vitality to all the elaborate preparation was wanting. Henry V is the ultimate development of the graceless, reckless, chivalrous, and fascinating Prince Hal of "Henry IV" at once sobered and inspired by responsibility. For such a part, which demands a combination of distinct and rare faculties—the lightness and eloquence of high comedy and the virility and fire of heroic romance —Mr. Mansfield was in many ways unequipped. His presentment was gallant and attractive in form, but heavy in manner and uninspired in spirit. It was deficient in grace of movement and gesture, in unconscious dignity, in geniality, in buoyancy, in eloquence, and spontaneous soldierly ardor. From first to last it labored beneath the actor's inveterate egoism and the fatal mannerisms — rigid, spasmodic gesture, stiff, jerky walk, and monotonous utterance—which marred so much of his most ambitious work.

During his mid-career he mastered most of the mechanical difficulties of his art, and greatly developed his powers of voicing the baser forms of passion. Thus in melodrama he was often ex-

ceedingly impressive. The loftier heights of tragic emotion he could not scale. That he had imagination was sufficiently proven by the range and variety of the characters he assumed, but he could only vitalize such ideals as could be expressed in the terms of his individual self. He was not really a versatile player except in the realm of eccentric comedy, where the mimetic faculty, which was strong in him, had full scope. Had he worked steadily along this line, he might have created masterpieces which would have won a permanent place in theatrical history. As it is, I can not recall a single character, of any importance, that is now associated with his name. His personality only will endure in the memory of his contemporaries.

XXII

AUGUSTIN DALY'S COMPANY

The fifteen years between 1885 and 1900 saw Daly's Theater in the height of its prosperity and in the beginning of its decadence. In an earlier chapter I wrote briefly concerning Augustin Daly as a manager, and there is not much to be added except in the way of confirmation. His actual achievement has been vastly overrated. There is very little solid foundation for the common belief that his contributions to the revival, or survival, of the literary and poetic drama were of any great or lasting value. It is true that he was a man of artistic tastes and impulses, and a most liberal, enterprising, and courageous manager, who could be daunted by no disaster, but was always ready with a fresh experiment. It is true that he had for many years the best light-comedy company in the country and that he was the author of many delightful entertainments, prepared and served in irreproachable fashion. But these, in the main,

were of an entirely ephemeral and unimportant kind.

In some of his more ambitious undertakings, his sense of artistic propriety did not prevent him from resorting to some of the most mischievous practises of the purely commercial and speculative managers. He did not hesitate, for instance, to sacrifice artistic principle for the sake of "booming" a popular actress, to put on plays for whose proper interpretation his players were unqualified, to mangle the text in order to minimize their incompetency, or to offer attractive spectacle as a substitute for good acting. Some of the pieces that he produced were unmitigated trash, flagrant melodramatic absurdities, with no other possible object than to catch the mob. I have already alluded to the fact that, on some occasions, even his scenery was flashy rather than artistically appropriate and meritorious. On the whole, however, he shone in contrast with most of his contemporaries, and to this fact, probably, may be attributed a considerable proportion of the critical complaisance which he enjoyed. Thus much in the interest of truth and common sense, but I am indebted to him for too many agreeable and not unprofitable evenings to wish to linger upon this phase of his career.

At the period of which I am writing his principal players—at one time or another—included Ada Rehan (whose death has been so recent), John Drew, Otis Skinner, Effie Shannon, Arthur Bourchier, and Frank Worthing (also recently dead)—all of whom were to be "stars" in the near future—and Mrs. Gilbert, James Lewis, Charles Fisher, William Davidge, George Clarke, Harry Edwards, and Charles Wheatleigh, of an older generation.

The list speaks for itself. No such aggregation of competent performers in light contemporary comedy has been in existence since. Their cooperation in the long succession of comedies provided for them, mostly from foreign sources, by Mr. Daly was admirable in smoothness, rapidity, and sustained spirit. All these pieces, though varying in incident and plot, carried a strong family resemblance, and present review of them would be tedious. Among them may be mentioned "A Night Off," Pinero's "The Magistrate," "Nancy & Company," "Love in Harness," "The Railroad of Love," "The Lottery of Love," "Dandy Dick," "The Golden Widow," "The Last Word," "Little Miss Million," "Love on Crutches," and "The Countess Gucki."

In all of these, and others of less note, Ada Rehan, John Drew, James Lewis, and Mrs. Gil-

bert were the protagonists. Miss Rehan, from the first, was in her element in every variety of piquant, tender, mischievous, high-spirited, alluring, whimsical, and provocative girlhood. Her humor was infectious, her charm potent, her pertness delicious, her petulance pretty, and her flashes of ire or scorn brilliant. She improved rapidly in artistry, and to the intuition of a clever novice she quickly added the skill of the trained comedian. John Drew, a tyro when he first joined Daly, soon became one of the best of leading juveniles, in any sort of part that did not involve serious sentiment or deep feeling. Humor of a distinctive quality—cynical, satirical, or genial—especially effective in situations of serio-comic perplexity, he had inherited from his parents, and he gradually acquired a notable refinement of style, with uncommon neatness of execution and capacity of repose. In this heyday of Daly's he promised to grow into one of the most accomplished comedians of his era, but his long apprenticeship in one line of work was to prove a bar to his further progress. As a modern man of the world—the polished clubman, the wise mentor, the social diplomatist, the polite wooer—he excelled all competitors, but when he tried to pass beyond the boundaries of the drawing-room into the outer

AUGUSTIN DALY'S STOCK COMPANY

Listening to the Reading by Augustin Daly of a New Play

Seated, left to right—James Lewis, George Parkes, Mrs. Gilbert, Ada Rehan, John Drew, Mr. Daly, Charles Fisher, Virginia Dreher

regions of poetic romance and the profounder human emotions, his equipment was insufficient and his habits so set and petrified by habit as to be no longer susceptible of growth. Inspiration, long confined, would not respond to the call of intelligence.

Mr. Daly, in 1880, effected a revival of "The Merry Wives of Windsor," which he had first produced fifteen years before. He mounted and dressed it sumptuously, but his players, with few exceptions, were sadly out of perspective, their modern manners contrasting strangely with the old costumes and direct and vigorous speech. They used to play the warm-blooded farce as if it were an anemic social comedy of the present, dealing with fashionable foibles and artificial elegances, instead of a study of human nature in an Elizabethan townlet. Shakespeare would have been sorely puzzled to recognize in these dandified folk the old burgesses of Windsor in their lusty sylvan simplicity. Beyond question he would have paid a poet's tribute to the loveliness of Ada Rehan and Virginia Dreher, but he never would have suspected that these dazzling young beauties, in their silks and laces and sparkling gems, were those noted gossips, Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, whom Fat Jack himself, even in a letter of courtship, was compelled

to admit were neither beautiful nor young. The Knight's tastes, it may be remembered, were not of the most fastidious kind.

The transformation of the husbands was no less complete. The fiery, jealous Ford, in the hands of John Drew, was a pretty fellow, an exquisite in dress, and a courtier in behavior, who, like Bottom's lion, roared like any sucking dove. The Page of Mr. Otis Skinner was a swaggering young prig, who might, for all his apparent years, have been the lover of his own daughter, Sweet Anne. The Falstaff of Charles Fisher—who now revealed the infirmities of age—was right in design, but bereft of unction and vitality. The Bardolph of Mr. Roberts had a red nose and that was all. The Pistol of George Parkes, gentlest of bullies, emitted little puffs and snorts, at intervals, with the decrepitude of an ancient bellows. James Lewis, quaintest and most delightful of comedians in his line, could do nothing with Slender. Mrs. Gilbert, who did nothing really ill, was hopelessly miscast in the part of Mrs. Quickly. The only really Shakespearean embodiment was John Wood's Nym, which, in its dry eccentricity, was a capital little study. The representation did not last long. There was no reason why it should. Upon its inevitable withdrawal there were the

usual lamentations over the degeneracy of the public taste. The public was not at fault. It exhibited better judgment and greater reverence for Shakespeare than the critics, who professed to enjoy and admire such a spiritless parody of him.

Mr. Daly approached a Shakespearean success much more nearly in 1887, when he produced "The Taming of the Shrew," with a luxurious setting and in something like the original form. The piece was simpler sailing for his company than "The Merry Wives," and the general performance, in the circumstances, was fairly creditable, though the text, in many instances, presented insoluble problems to the speakers. Moreover, the play was a comparative novelty to the New York public, and as such was cordially accepted. As Katharine, Ada Rehan won a personal triumph, and the part remained long in her repertory. For myself, I must confess that I could never fully agree with the panegyrics bestowed upon her performance here and, afterward, in England. Undoubtedly, it was a good one—in some respects even brilliant, but I fancy that the personal fascination of the actress—which, in her prime, was very great—had much to do with the wide critical acceptance of it. Her Shrew was a superb figure, but to my mind she

vulgarized the character somewhat unnecessarily.

It is true enough that, in the text, Katharine's unmanageable temper is described in words that would warrant almost any degree of coarseness and violence, but some allowance must be made for the bluntness and vigor of Elizabethan speech, and it should not be forgotten that Katharine was the daughter of a merchant prince, moved in "upper circles," so to speak, and, presumably, had the training of a gentlewoman in a period precise in its code of manners. On the whole, it is reasonable to suppose that she had her normal moments and that it was only in her tantrums that she became positively outrageous. The play itself, although it contains some notable blank verse, is not of very much consequence, but it would lose nothing in humor and gain in plausibility and interest with a higher conception of Katharine than that of a half-crazy virago. She ought to suggest some of the graces of her station, carry with her a certain personal distinction, and exhibit passion in varying degrees. Miss Rehan started her performance at the highest pitch of quivering indignation at her command, and thereby secured a most picturesque and effective entrance. She maintained herself at this level, or near it, with amazing energy, but the effort left her without

Otis Skinner Virginia Dreher Ada Rehan Mrs. Gilbert

"A NIGHT OFF"

any reserve force for climaxes. Consequently, her performance was lacking in light and shade, and grew weaker instead of stronger toward the end. But it marked an upward step in her career. Mr. Drew played Petruchio with a gay audacity that met all the absolute requirements of the situation, although he was not an authoritative figure.

Mr. Daly's revival of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," in 1888, was chiefly remarkable for its beautiful pictures, especially in the woodland and fairy scenes, and an excellently painted panorama showing the passage of Theseus in his barge to Athens. A most felicitous use of little electric lights was made in the fairy episodes, and the management of the elfin troops themselves was eminently imaginative and picturesque. A more exquisite or delicate setting of this lovely poetic fantasy could not reasonably be desired, but the performance itself was far from satisfactory and calls for no prolonged comment. The poetry suffered severely in its delivery by unaccustomed lips, and most of the impersonations were laboriously feeble.

Ada Rehan was a charming Helena to the eye, but was unimpressive in the serious passages, while her reading of the blank verse was monotonous. It was not until her quarrel with

Hermia that she did herself justice. This she made delicious with a dash of her characteristic comedy. Otis Skinner imparted a welcome spirit to his Lysander. John Drew was not at all at ease as Demetrius, but avoided positive failure. James Lewis was exceedingly comical as Bottom, and was rewarded with abundant laughter, but exhibited no comprehension of the character. He was a clever mime striving to make himself ridiculous, not a stupid man ridiculous in spite of himself. His burlesque tragedy, however, set the audience in a roar. In an expurgated version of Farquhar's "The Inconstant," which Mr. Daly gave a year later, the chief feature of the performance was the Old Mirabel of Charles Fisher, which had the true flavor of the original. The Oriana of Ada Rehan was entirely modern, but earnest, piquant, and womanly. She played the mad scene well and made a pretty counterfeit of a boy, although her disguise could have deceived nobody. Mr. Drew was but a pale reflection of the true Mirabel, but played the part with a crispness and neatness which were not ineffective.

"As You Like It," which Mr. Daly produced in 1889, was among the most satisfactory of his representations of Shakespearean comedy. The piece made no extraordinary demand upon the

histrionic faculties of the company, and supplied opportunities for pictorial beauty of which Mr. Daly availed himself with his habitual liberality and artistic sentiment. The groups of foresters were picturesquely ordered, and the sylvan music was entrusted to thoroughly competent performers. Ada Rehan made a hit as Rosalind, a part which for long was one of the most popular in her repertory. The more subtle romantic elements of the character—the poetic essence, the delicate sentiment, the graces of inherent nobility—she did not much concern herself about, and her delivery of the text was marred by the elocutionary faults which she never overcame, but she presented a bewitching picture of health and youth animated by a high and frolicsome spirit, just a little dashed at times by the tender anxieties of love. Her first meeting with Orlando was marked by coquetry rather than timidity, but was very pretty, natural, and feminine. Her retort upon the tyrant Duke had spirit and dignity, but in this passage she was far excelled by Mary Anderson, who had the gift of majestic utterance.

Her doublet and hose became her excellently, and she played the scenes with Orlando with a pretty affectation of boyish swagger mingled with maidenly consciousness. The humor of it

all was scarcely in the poetic or Shakespearean vein, but her acting was unaffected, lifelike, and sympathetic. It was a performance of great but not superlative merit. Henrietta Crosman, herself a Rosalind of future distinction, gave unwonted animation to Celia. She endowed that young lady with more liveliness, perhaps, than properly belongs to her, but she pleased her audience mightily.

John Drew played Orlando with appropriate simplicity, directness, and sincerity—creating a most favorable impression—and Charles Fisher made a noble and pathetic figure as old Adam. The Touchstone of James Lewis was delightfully quaint and humorous, if not preeminently Shakespearean. George Clarke, a thoroughly competent actor, played Jacques with a studied naturalism which was not ineffective, but robbed the character of some of its intellectual distinction. His realism was not assisted by the orchestra, which, for some inscrutable reason, was permitted to play accompaniments to his soliloquies. The Le Beau of Sidney Herbert, the Charles of Mr. Bosworth, the Oliver of Eugene Ormond, the First Lord of William Hamilton, the Corin of Charles Leclercq, and the Silvius of Mr. Bond were all commendable. The representation, in a word, if never brilliant, was consistently capable and pleasing.

ADA REHAN
as "Rosalind"

JOHN DREW
as "Orlando"

JAMES LEWIS
as "Touchstone"

"AS YOU LIKE IT"

Mr. Daly made a sumptuous and, in some respects, brilliant revival of "The School for Scandal" in 1891. Following a mischievous example, he transposed some of the scenes for his own managerial convenience, and even ventured to add a few lines to the text. There was no particular harm done—as only the order, not the matter, was changed; but all tinkering of this sort in the case of masterpieces is unjustifiable. Elisions, of course, and condensations are often inevitable, but any attempt to modernize an old play—of any serious value—by chopping and reconstruction is illogical and absurd on the face of it. It is like putting new patches upon old garments. The result is something entirely nondescript, inharmonious, and insignificant. The gem of the present performance was the Sir Oliver Surface of Harry Edwards, which was the best I remember. Finished to the nail, sturdy, shrewd, brimful of genial, quizzical humor, it was a most vital and winning impersonation. As Charles Surface John Drew gave one of the most artistic performances of his career. His impersonation was second only to that of Charles Coghlan. Especially was it praiseworthy for its artistic restraint in the drinking scene—a most elaborate set. He was perhaps a trifle too cool, insufficiently mercurial

for the reckless company he affected, but he evidently remembered that Charles, with all his follies, was a decent fellow at bottom, and not wholly unworthy of the eulogies of his old friend Rowley. His manner was elegant, and he spoke his lines without exaggerated emphasis, but with a full appreciation of their humor.

In the screen scene his mirthfulness was tempered by the intuitive tactfulness of a well-bred man. He exhibited delicate consideration for the feelings of the stricken husband and the humiliated woman, while revelling in the discomfiture of his hypocritical brother. His whole conduct in this scene was an achievement in the first rank of artificial comedy. The Joseph Surface of George Clarke was another excellent bit of acting, elegant, suave, and convincingly plausible, the real hypocrisy just betraying itself beneath the almost unconscious veneer of sham sentiment. In variety and eloquence of facial expression it was uncommonly felicitous. The Mrs. Candor of Mrs. Gilbert, the Moses of James Lewis, the Backbite of Sidney Herbert, and the Crabtree of Charles Leclercq were all capital. Ada Rehan was not the real Lady Teazle, although filling the part perfectly to the eye. Her overanxiety about her points betrayed her into many inconsistencies and exaggerations. There is no

mystery about the character. Lady Teazle was a young girl, bred wholly in the country, trying, but not quite successfully, to be a fine lady. In the opening scene Miss Rehan was too much of the fine lady, and in others not enough. In her quarrel with Sir Peter she adopted the methods of low comedy, descending almost to the level of Jenny O'Jones. Her "country girl," was too much in evidence. In the screen scene her pretense of yielding to Joseph's wooing was so plainly false that it could never have beguiled that astute young gentleman into a declaration. After the discovery, her profession of penitence was made with an elaborate deliberation which precluded all confidence in her sincerity, but there was genuine snap in her biting retort upon the discomfited Joseph. Her Lady Teazle, however, can not be counted among her conspicuous successes.

Mr. Daly, doubtless, trusted greatly to the magic of Tennyson's name when he produced the English laureate's woodland play, "The Foresters," in 1892. It was a chivalrous and artistic thing to do. The play itself, of which Robin Hood and Maid Marian were the protagonists, was a simple compound, almost wholly devoid of dramatic interest or consistency, in which nursery legend was crudely mixed with

melodrama. From the literary point of view, of course, it was worthy of all the scenic adornment with which Mr. Daly enriched it. The pure, clear English of the text, the sweet, fresh, wholesome patriotic spirit that pervades it, the deft imitation of the humor in Shakespeare's rural scenes, the varied and insistent music of the lines, all afforded an enjoyment rare indeed in the contemporary theater. But there was nothing dramatic in it and not much that was even theatrical. Ada Rehan, in looking pretty as Maid Marian, and John Drew, in giving Robin an active and virile appearance, did about all that it was possible for them to do.

Many eloquent encomiums were lavished upon the production of "Twelfth Night," which Mr. Daly produced in 1893, and especially upon the Viola of Ada Rehan. I wish I could agree with them. Pictorially the representation was charming, but there honest praise must end. Most of the actors were unequal to the parts assigned them, and the general performance was devoid alike of romance and poetry. The character of Viola, charged with the most delicate and fanciful sentiment, was outside the range of Ada Rehan, except in those phases of it denoted in the comic vein. Her delivery of verse, whether blank or rhymed, was always curiously monoto-

nous and inexpressive. She was fairly successful in the soliloquy after her first interview with Olivia, and the duel scene—of which, in accordance with silly tradition, she made roaring farce—but in the sentimental and poetic interludes her droning sing-song robbed the lines of nearly all their poetic essence. She was lacking, moreover, in that refined and measured grace of gesture and action essential to illusion in any attempt to embody a conception so ethereal and free from earthly grossness.

XXIII

MORE ABOUT AUGUSTIN DALY'S COMPANY—THE MADISON SQUARE COMPANY

Convincing proof of Daly's artistic ambition was furnished in 1895, when he revived "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," a comedy which had not been seen in this country for fifty years. The experiment, it must be added, was not attended by any large measure of success. The play is not a good one for acting purposes, most of the personages being shadowy and the story confused and violently improbable. But the dialogue bears the unmistakable stamp of Shakespeare's genius in many isolated passages full of delightful grace and imagery, quaint humor, and charming sentiment. Their superfine quality is presumptive evidence of corruption, or divided workmanship in other parts of the text. Mr. Daly did not try to produce the piece in anything like its original form. He reduced the five acts to four, cut the lines freely, and transposed or omitted scenes to suit his own purpose. No fault is to be found with him on this count; on the whole, he did his work neatly and

with sufficient discretion, presenting an acting version that ran tolerably smoothly and was fairly coherent. The acting was of passable merit, but never brilliant enough to impress any part of it indelibly on the memory. Ada Rehan's Julia, like her Viola, exercised the personal fascination of the actress. The Valentine of John Craig, the Duke of George Clarke, the Sir Thurio of Sidney Herbert, the Speed of Herbert Gresham, the Lucetta of Sibyl Carlisle, and the Sylvia of Miss Elliot were all capable, and James Lewis was exceedingly comical as Launce. But the real attractions lay in the stage pictures, which were uncommonly rich in spectacular and artistic beauty, and the interpolated music of Sir Henry Bishop. In its entirety this was choice entertainment, but to say that it was Shakespearean would be gross flattery.

Augustin Daly delayed his production of "Much Ado About Nothing" far too long. When he essayed this scintillating comedy in 1898 his company had been sorely weakened by death and desertion, and he had little left but his scene painters. They, as often before, helped him manfully in his hour of need, but it is not for the framework in which they are placed that Shakespeare lovers go to see Benedick and Beatrice. His scenic apparatus was all that could

be desired—he never stinted care or money—but his performers, many of them raw recruits from the contemporary theater, were utterly at sea. With all their vivacity, earnestness, and general intelligence, they had none of the assurance, distinction, gallantry, or address indispensable in literary and romantic comedy.

Some of our modern critics—many of whom never saw literary comedy or tragedy properly performed—are very contemptuous in their references to the artificiality and unreality of the style of the old-time actors. Of course, it was artificial and unreal, but only in the sense that all the great masterpieces of imaginative fiction are unreal. It was a style deliberately cultivated, and developed through some centuries of experience to harmonize with, and give full effect to, incidents, thoughts, aspirations, and emotions outside the experience of common humanity. It did not, perhaps, always achieve its full purpose, but it came infinitely nearer to the realization of the fanciful than the ignoble and slovenly utterance and unregulated, spasmodic, and inexpressive gesture of the untaught, and self-acting player ever can. It involved a laborious study of artistic principles, and it was abandoned chiefly because it was laborious. As the demand for actors increased with the multiplication of

speculative theaters and modern social plays, the opportunities of teaching them grew less and less. If Miss Ada Rehan had learned the secrets of this old school, her Beatrice would not have been so markedly deficient in the air of personal distinction naturally associated with the brilliant Lady Disdain. Her impersonation, although rightly spirited, was somewhat over-robust and broad in humor. It was, in manner, a replica of her Lady Teazle. Beatrice stands upon a much higher intellectual plane, and her wit is of a keener and higher order. Not that Miss Rehan failed to give emphasis to her lines; on the contrary, in her eagerness to make the most of every point, she delivered her thrusts with a deliberation and serious intent which almost conveyed a suggestion of malignity, entirely inconsistent with the character. Beatrice was half in love with her antagonist when she rated him most sharply. In the church scene, Miss Rehan won her audience by a fine display of honest womanly indignation, but she never really "got into the skin" of Beatrice. In the whole of this representation there were but two characters which were adequately portrayed. One was the Don John of Sidney Herbert, a sinister, Mephistophelian, courtly villain, who completely satisfied the imagination, and the Dogberry of William

Griffiths, which had all the owlish solemnity, dull persistency, and placid self-content of that monumental jackass.

Here is a convenient place to say farewell to Daly's Theater, which already had begun to lose some of its earlier prestige. Since the death of Lester Wallack, it had been acknowledged to be the leading comedy theater of the country, but it was only in the lighter forms of comedy that it habitually excelled. Mr. Daly suffered by the progressive degeneracy of the stage, which in his day was very rapid. The race of educated, all-round actors was dying out, and in his most ambitious efforts he was handicapped by the lack of suitable material. There was no existent body of trained actors from which he could obtain recruits. The few accomplished players he possessed were not enough to carry the company safely through the difficult tasks assigned to them. He did much excellent work, and his theater for many years was an institution of which any city might be proud, but it was not a productive school. It contributed nothing to the theater of the future. John Drew and Ada Rehan, indeed, continued to revolve in their respective orbits, as solitary stars, for many years, but they grew no brighter, achieved no new renown. They only continued to do in

the old way what they had done many times before. When it was too late, Mr. Drew tried to break the shackles that bound him and take a step upward. He essayed Benedick—but it would be futile to discuss an experiment which is not likely to be renewed.

In 1885, A. M. Palmer assumed the management of the Madison Square Theater—a pretty little house of the bandbox variety, which, under the earlier direction of the Rev. Dr. Mallory, had been chiefly remarkable for the enduring popularity of Steele Mackaye's "Hazel Kirke," in which much excellent acting was done by C. W. Couldock, Effie Ellsler, and Eben Plympton —with an uncommonly able company, carefully collected with a view to the special character of the work to be done. It will not be necessary to linger long over this particular chapter of New York theatrical history, for not many of the plays produced had much literary or dramatic worth, but some of the performances were altogether uncommon in their histrionic excellence. Mr. Palmer could estimate the capacities of his actors much more accurately than could Mr. Daly and rarely miscast them. He began operations with the "Sealed Instructions" of Mrs. J. C. Campbell Verplanck, a melodrama clearly preposterous when subjected to any sort of

analysis, but packed with effective situations and sentiment of the purely theatrical kind. Nothing need be said about it. But the acting was of that competent and vivid sort that establishes temporary illusion.

Jessie Millward, who was to prove herself one of the cleverest of modern actresses in melodrama and social comedy, made a living creation of an impossible heroine. Her embodiment was signalized by delicacy, tenderness, glowing emotion, vivacity, refinement, and grace. Her crisp, clear, resonant and tuneful speech—few actresses surpass her in elocutionary art—lent distinction to very common dialogue. Henry M. Pitt, an English actor of a refined but somewhat heavy type, was exactly suited in the character of a drawling, imperturbable, unscrupulous reprobate, with a fine veneer of social polish. Herbert Kelcey played the maligned and self-sacrificing hero with fine tact and manliness. Fred Robinson, the old Sadler's Wells man—an actor of invaluable experience—enacted an ambassador with authoritative ease and forceful skill; W. J. Lemoyne made a small part prominent by the nicety of its finish. Annie Russell contributed a charming sketch of girlish innocence. The whole representation was alive from start to finish, and thus substantial success was won by a poor play.

There was much more sterling quality in "Saints and Sinners," which must always have a high place among the successful plays of Henry Arthur Jones. It is too well known to need description. The story, as cavilling critics have suggested, may be conventional, the treatment theatrical, and some of the sentiment a trifle syrupy, but the piece is full of strong, vital, varied characterization, is admirably compact and effective, is unquestionably true to life in many of its details. and sane, vigorous, and wholesome in tone. Not many better plays of its class have been seen in this city. J. H. Stoddart played the central part of the old minister with great realism, picturesqueness, humor, pathos, and thrilling bursts of passion. The dignity of his rebuke to the seducer, his agony of apprehension and fear on hearing of his daughter's flight, his ecstasy upon her recovery, and his triumph over temptation in the scene with the deacons, were notable points in a memorable embodiment.

The hypocritical Deacon of W. J. Lemoyne was a striking study finished with rare delicacy and firmness. Davidge depicted a sodden old drunkard with a realism that would have been painful but for the redeeming vein of unctuous humor. C. P. Flockton, another veteran, was a babbling,

greedy, foolish old grocer to the life. L. F. Massen made a hit by the simple manliness of the rural lover, and Herbert Kelcey was an attractive and specious seducer. A prettier or more sympathetic heroine than Marie Burroughs could scarcely have been found, while all the subordinate characters were of a corresponding excellence. There never was the least doubt of the success of this representation. I can not recall more than two or three instances in my long experience when a good play, well performed, has failed to find appreciative audiences. Good acting has often given long life to bad plays, and innumerable good plays have been damned on account of incompetent representation, but where play and acting are both good the public judgment may be trusted to recognize the fact and reward it.

Spectators flocked in great numbers to the Madison Square Theater when W. S. Gilbert's brilliant, satirical extravaganza "Engaged" was put on. In this case, again, the entire representation, scenic and histrionic, was admirable, worthy of the intellectual and humorous delights of the dialogue. The outstanding feature was the Belinda Treherne of Agnes Booth, an almost perfect realization of the author's ideal. It was a delicious bit of artistry, as good an example

of refined, subtle, and spirited burlesque as any one could wish to see. In facial expression, illuminative gesture, mock heroics, alert attention veiled by feigned abstraction, it was infinitely dexterous, neat, imaginative, and consistent. The tart scene was inimitable. Success has its penalties. The necessity of eating so many tarts every night finally brought to Mrs. Booth an anticipatory nausea which threatened calamity. Tarts became to her a word of hideous and revolting omen. The problem was solved by the ingenuity of the pastry cook, who evolved a wafer counterfeit, empty and collapsible, which could be disposed of without passing the lips at all, and without the audience being any the wiser. Thus the comedy went on, and the tarts were satisfactorily consumed without being eaten.

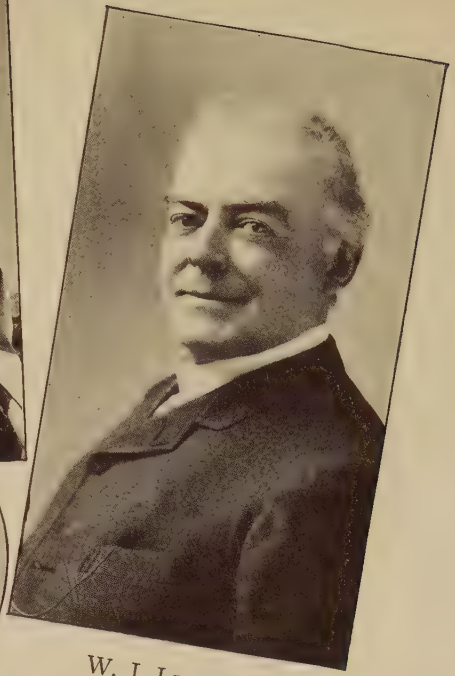
Soon afterward this accomplished actress was seen to great advantage in "Old Love Letters," the miniature comedy into which Bronson Howard put some of his very best work. This was played with W. S. Gilbert's poetical satire, "Broken Hearts," a piece flavored with a somewhat sour cynicism, but of very positive literary merit, and rich in quaint, fanciful humor and human experience. This, too, was singularly well acted and most tastefully mounted. Louis Mas-

sen was a romantic figure as Florian and played him with fervor, grace, and discernment. W. J. Lemoyne enacted Mousta with complete comprehension and ripe skill, while Maud Harrison, an actress noted chiefly for her archly impish coquetry, played the Lady Hilda with sweet and simple seriousness and read her lines most musically and well. These were entertainments in which the most intelligent could rejoice.

"Jim the Penman" was, perhaps, the most successful of all the Madison Square productions. This noted play of Sir Charles Young was only melodrama, of course, but an uncommonly good specimen, ingenious, abounding in suspense and situation, very adroitly built, and vital though conventional in characterization. Of itself it was not of much importance, but good melodrama, with the throb of honest emotion in it, and a plausible resemblance to the facts of life, is a form of art and has its legitimate place in the best theaters. It often furnishes opportunities for creative acting far superior to those of the ordinary social play, and is not much more remote from reality. In "Jim the Penman" the acting was of high quality throughout, and in some respects brilliant. This last epithet may be applied properly to the Mrs. Ralston of Agnes Booth. She had to play the part of a good

JESSIE MILLWARD

EBEN PLYMPTON
as "Orlando," in "As You Like It"



W. J. LEMOYNE

EFFIE ELLSLER

woman, a devoted wife and mother, suddenly awakened to the fact that her husband, in whom she has reposed the most implicit faith and trust, is a great criminal. The knowledge comes to her in the third act, when she discovers a forged signature which she knows he has written. A finer example of the eloquence of facial expression than she exhibited in this scene has seldom been shown upon the stage. For several minutes she sat almost motionless, without uttering a word, trusting solely to the play of her features to reveal the course of her thoughts. Any failure of significance would have made the scene tedious, the least exaggeration might have made it ridiculous. She avoided both dangers with the surest instinct, and held the audience in frozen suspense.

It was acting of the most subtle, delicate, and intellectual kind. Subsequently she reaped a whirlwind of applause by the really magnificent outburst of scornful passion with which she denounced her husband, and she triumphed again in the womanly appeal addressed to his better nature in the last act. Equally fine was the emotional pathos she displayed in the farewell scene with her daughter. Only a most accomplished artist could have wrought such effects with methods of such exquisite simplicity. It was

work worthy of a great dramatic masterpiece, and probably was the finest achievement in her career. Frederick Robinson, a thoroughly expert actor, played the Penman with great tact and skill. The character was one of common melodramatic type, but he vitalized it by his intelligence. The minute detail with which he indicated the incessant strain of suspicion and anxiety beneath the assumption of jovial and placid prosperity was exceedingly clever, and in the later scenes his fits of rage and remorse had power and sincerity. Mr. Pitt was manly and attractive as a virtuous lover. Mr. Lemoyne furnished a vigorous and finished study of a foreign sharper, and E. M. Holland presented an original and delightfully humorous sketch of a civil service detective. William Davidge, C. P. Flockton, Mrs. Phillips, Louis Massen, and Maud Harrison played subordinate parts with satisfying competence. This was not only a good show —it was a first-rate theatrical performance.

This remark would be true also of "The Martyr," adapted from a play of D'Ennery by that wily theatrical purveyor, A. R. Cazauran, but the piece itself was mere theatrical claptrap, a huddle of sensational and emotional situations. It pleased the public for many weeks, but the only meritorious thing about it was the

performance. Agnes Booth, Mrs. E. J. Phillips, Fred. Robinson, J. H. Stoddart, William Davidge, C. P. Flockton, E. M. Holland, and Maud Harrison all distinguished themselves, and their united efforts carried the play safely over many perilous places. One of the notable performances that contributed to the success was that of a young foreign adventurer by Alexandro Salvini, son of the unapproachable Tommaso, who, beyond question, inherited some part of his father's genius. He died too soon. He it was who won the chief honors in "Partners," a play which Robert Buchanan adapted, not maladroitly, from "Fromont Jeune et Risler ainé."

As the deceived husband he demonstrated his rare powers of versatility, his sense of character, and his great range of emotional expression. There was scarcely a trace of his personal individuality—which was of a striking kind—or even of his nationality, in the middle-aged German whom he presented. His jovial, boisterous, awkward, but self-reliant, loyal, tender-hearted man of affairs was a copy from life. It was in the passionate scenes of the third and fourth acts that he gave evidence of the sacred fire within him, and electrified the house. As the ruin of his business and the threatened disgrace to his home gradually came to his percep-

tion, the variety and vividness of his pantomime and facial expression were astonishing in one so young. The artistic restraint which he observed in the earlier scenes was in splendid contrast with the paroxysms of fury in which his rising wrath culminated. He gave no cause for the least suspicion of rant. The control he held over the swelling volume of his passion up to the climax was presumptive evidence of genius. There were moments in his denunciation of his foolish wife and his treacherous partner, when, in vocal volume, terribleness of aspect, and emotional impulse, he recalled memories of his mighty sire. One of them was at that instant when he stripped the jewels from his kneeling wife. By this single performance he won a place in the first rank of emotional actors. He eclipsed all his associates—it is only fair to add that he had most of the opportunities—but E. M. Holland, Mrs. E. J. Phillips, William Davidge, C. P. Flockton, and Marie Burroughs did excellent work in the supporting cast.

The "Captain Swift" of C. Haddon Chambers was in general character akin to "Jim the Penman," but a melodrama of much inferior quality. Here its inherent weaknesses were increased by a feeble "happy ending." Originally the hero, when hopelessly at bay, blew out his brains,

which lent the piece a measure of dramatic consistency and dignity. Structurally considered it was cleverly put together, but there was nothing in it to warrant present discussion. The performance, however, if not in all respects equal to that of "Jim the Penman," was not far behind it in merit. Agnes Booth acted very finely in the somewhat unsympathetic part of the heroine, and Maurice Barrymore, then in the heyday of youth and vigor, was a picturesque hero, and acted well until he was asked to be pathetic. J. H. Stoddart, Fred Robinson, E. M. Holland, Annie Russell, and Marie Burroughs all had parts nicely suited to their respective capacities, and every theatrical opportunity in the play received its full value. Such a representation would have insured the success of a much sillier piece.

In "Aunt Jack," an English farcical comedy, by Ralph R. Lumley, in which Mrs. John Wood had delighted London for months, Agnes Booth, who was not regarded generally as a comic actress—her Constance in "King John" enjoyed high repute—demonstrated her all-round training and elastic ability. She presented a most lifelike type of a peppery, impetuous, self-willed, somewhat vulgar, but thoroughly warm-hearted woman. Her performance was one that Mrs. John Wood herself might have been proud of,

and she was admirably assisted by E. M. Holland, J. H. Stoddart, Fred Robinson, and Maud Harrison. The play was naught, but the representation was good enough to justify the production.

In "A Pair of Spectacles" ("Les Petits Oiseaux"), one of the happiest adaptations of Sidney Grundy, the Madison Square company gave further proof of its general competency. The play, one of those precious comedies in which a structure of delightful and natural humor is reared upon a foundation of wise and sympathetic philosophy, is too well known to need description. The parts of the two brothers were entrusted to the veteran J. H. Stoddart and E. M. Holland. The former, a comedian of a dry and somewhat pungent order, was not able, perhaps, to personify all the radiant, beaming benignity with which John Hare endowed the philanthropic Benjamin, but in his white locks and gold spectacles he was a striking picture of elderly amiability. His acting in the earlier scenes was exceedingly subtle and delicate, the easy deliberation of his manner, suave gesture, gentle speech, and ever-ready smile being consistently emblematic of a generous, contented, unsuspicious nature. It was all upon the level of high comedy, a genuine study from nature idealized and illumined by art and humor. Most

artistic was his denotement of the slow development of the evil spirit engendered in him by the teaching of his brother and his own unlucky discoveries of imposture. The various stages of his transformation through the use of Gregory's hideously practical spectacles were marked with an exquisite sense of proportion. In the end he was somewhat too vehement and noisy, giving too much rein to the comic impulse within him, but his performance as a whole was masterly.

E. M. Holland, whose task was less difficult, was almost equally good as the grasping, grinding Sheffield merchant, Gregory. In dress, manner, and movement he represented a convincing image of bull-headed self-reliance, wide-awake shrewdness and selfish prosperity. There was a chill in the very humor of it. Maud Harrison played the part of Benjamin's young and affectionate wife in exactly the right mood of semi-comic, semi-pathetic amazement and perplexity. Minor parts were played by Fred Robinson and others with unfailing cooperative intelligence. This good performance of a good play found the usual reward in the cordial and prolonged appreciation of the public.

The record in these pages does not pretend to be complete or consecutive. Its only aim is to note briefly those personal and managerial

achievements upon the New York stage, in my experience of it, which seem most deserving of remembrance. After "A Pair of Spectacles" nothing of special note occurred at the Madison Square Theater, which A. M. Palmer was soon to relinquish to assume control of Wallack's, where his good fortune deserted him. His choice of plays—most of them have been long forgotten—was not happy, and although they were always admirably mounted and excellently performed—some very brilliant work was done by J. H. Stoddart and Fred Robinson in a clever but incredible play, by Sidney Grundy, called "The Broken Seal"—they failed to please the public, and before long a career of hitherto almost unbroken prosperity ended in financial disaster. Mr. Palmer was a valuable asset to the American theater in his day. Although comparatively few of the plays that he produced were of any great literary or dramatic consequence, they were for the most part excellent specimens of their kind, and in all the details of production—cast, scenery, and stage management—he always exhibited taste, liberality, and knowledge.

XXIV

THE LYCEUM THEATER COMPANY

Among the stock companies of the period now under consideration, that of the Lyceum Theater under the management of Daniel Frohman must not be overlooked. It was not, in the strictest sense of the phrase, a stock company, for it underwent a good many changes from season to season, recruits coming and going pretty frequently, but it generally had a backbone of sterling players, who gave artistic tone and substance to performances of a very varied character. Mr. Frohman was—and still is, in spite of his recent association with the "movies"—essentially a theatrical man. Associated with the footlights, in one capacity or another, from early youth, he has probably forgotten more about the practical details of production, in and out of the theater, than any of his professional associates ever knew. His invaluable experience was reinforced by great executive ability, indefatigable industry, shrewdness, and good taste. Strong as was the commercial instinct in him —and it is in the ideal commercial theater that

anything like a permanent theatrical revival must be looked for—it did not dominate his artistic ambition to establish a theater which should meet the support of fastidious playgoers. And his efforts in this direction were successful in considerable degree. But this ambition was qualified by an inherent distrust of the capacity of the public to appreciate the values of dramatic art in its best forms, and in seeking the "popular" he sometimes fell below the level of his own standards. Nevertheless there were some superior plays and much excellent acting at the Lyceum under his direction, and several of the younger players who served their apprenticeship there proved the efficiency of the training by developing into successful stars. Prominent among these were E. H. Sothern, Georgia Cayvan, Mary Mannering, J. K. Hackett, and Henry Miller.

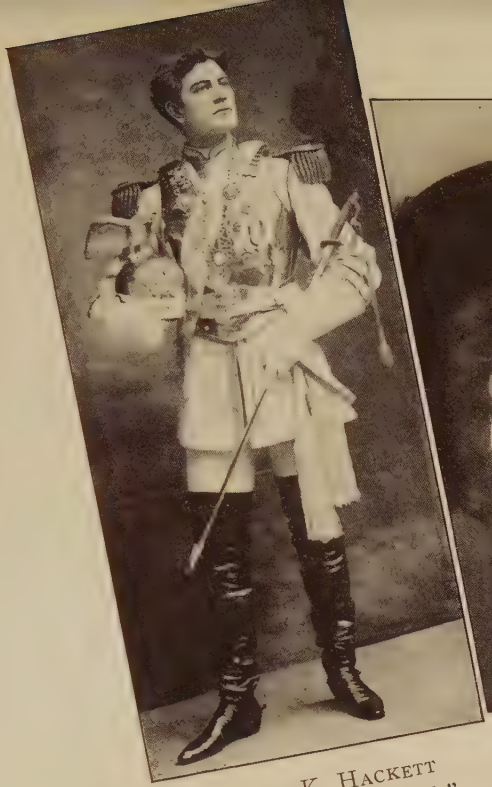
Not many of the plays produced will need even passing notice. Few of them failed completely—for Mr. Frohman did not make many serious mistakes—and all of them were capably acted and admirably mounted; but some were mere trifles, others of a conventional social type, and comparatively few distinguished. The total record was honorable rather than brilliant. In "One of Our Girls" (1885) Mr. Bronson Howard chose

for his subject the vast differences between the French and American systems in matrimonial engagements. The piece was one of his most popular achievements, but was not a very valuable contribution to drama or social philosophy. It had some literary skill—the dialogue being lively, crisp, and effective—but told a most improbable story and was full of flagrant exaggerations. His American girl was made to talk and act in a manner which would have greatly astonished the circles she was supposed to adorn and was interpreted by an actress, Helen Dauvray, who had not the tact to soften her asperities, but rather enhanced them. There was, however, an abundance of clap-trap to tickle the ears of the groundlings. But there was a scene in the third act in which E. H. Sothern, then a novice gave evidence of the stuff that was in him by a nicely conceived bit of quiet, dignified, manly acting, which won for him a special recall.

This probably prompted Mr. Frohman to give him the part of Prosper Couramont in a revival of "A Scrap of Paper" a year later. It was a risky experiment thus to challenge comparison with one of Lester Wallack's most admired impersonations, but the young actor endured the ordeal with credit. He had not the presence, the authority, the quizzical humor, or the consum-

mate art of his illustrious predecessor, but he played with refinement, vivacity, and vigor, and altogether did exceedingly well. In "The Highest Bidder," a mixture of farce and melodrama, he assumed a part that was specially devised for his father, E. A. Sothern, and made a decided hit, although he laid himself open to the charge of exaggeration both in the more comic and serious scenes. He was still in his formative period, but his progress in executive ability was rapid, and, soon afterward, his unflagging vivacity as the impecunious young journalist in "The Great Pink Pearl" won him a substantial success. At this time his chief strength seemed to be in scenes of comic perplexity.

"The Wife," a social play in which Messrs. De Mille and Belasco collaborated, may be permitted to remain in oblivion, but it afforded opportunities to Herbert Kelcey and two rising young actors, Henry Miller and Georgia Cayvan. Henry Miller, as a lover, interpreted some emotional scenes with impressive force, if somewhat crude methods, and Georgia Cayvan, an actress of sound intelligence and conscientious purpose, who was graduated from the lecture platform, and whose acting always showed the influence of that experience, displayed much true feeling and a tactful self-restraint in making the



JAMES K. HACKETT
in "The Prisoner of Zenda"

MARY MANNERING

HENRY MILLER
in "Heartsease"

confession of a repentant wife. She was not gifted with any large amount of imagination or inspiration, but her frank and hearty manner and precise, confident method were attractive and satisfying, and she was a great favorite at the Lyceum for several years. She and Herbert Kelcey were curiously cast in a revival of Pinero's "Sweet Lavender," which had a long run.

Pinero, who apparently adopted his idea of an American gentleman from the columns of *Punch,* drew his Horace Bream, a supposed New Yorker, in the spirit of burlesque. This character was entrusted to Mr. Kelcey, the only Englishman in the cast. Miss Cayvan had to be Miss Gilfillian, an Englishwoman of a pronounced type. Neither performer made the slightest approach to the intent of the author, but by ignoring it greatly added to the plausibility of the comedy. Mr. Kelcey converted the pushful American, who carries his point always by sheer force of "bluff" and "cheek," into a vivacious, resourceful, but courteous gentleman, while Miss Cayvan, stripping Miss Gilfillian of her primness and awful respect for propriety, presented her as a charming, bright, and unaffected specimen of womanhood. The result of the double misrepresentation was altogether satisfactory. The general interpretation of the play was ad-

mirable. Mr. Lemoyne, always to be depended upon in eccentric comedy, was overweighted in the purely pathetic scenes of Dick Phenyl, but played him delightfully in the lighter passages, with rich humor and artistic realism.

The company was scarcely equal to the emotional requirements of "The Marquise," a version of Sardou's "Ferréol," which was one of the earlier Union Square successes, but Miss Cayvan played the heroine with notable ability. She atoned largely for her want of finesse by her manifest sincerity. In the meeting with her former lover, when she realizes the dilemma in which she has been placed by her imprudence, she interpreted with unaffected naturalness the conflicting emotions of a loving wife and devoted mother, forced to decide between clear duty and self-interest. Her performance at the crisis marked an upward step in her histrionic progress. In the third act she was too boisterous, but in the final act her confession was made with a simplicity that was really fine. An excellent reader always, the set deliberation, with tears in her eyes and throat, with which she brokenly recited the story of her indiscretion, was highly artistic. Mr. Lemoyne, as the gamekeeper, was the only player in the supporting cast who realized all his opportunities. He furnished a mem-

orable study of malignant cunning, and desperate villany.

"The Idler" was one of the notable productions at the Lyceum. Of no real dramatic consequence, this piece demonstrated the uncommon ingenuity of Haddon Chambers in the concoction of a melodramatic plot, false to nature and fact, but bristling with stirring theatrical scenes of incident and emotion, and fairly plausible in its rapidity of action. It was remarkably well acted throughout. Miss Cayvan, as the heroine, in the various crises to which she was subjected, surpassed herself not only in passionate utterance, but in the denotement of suppressed agitation. She had not the artistic cunning of Agnes Booth or any of the marvelous faculty of Clara Morris for suggesting untold agonies beneath a stony calm. There was no intimation in her emotional language of something greater and deeper that could be uttered. All lay upon the surface. But her vigor and earnestness created at least the momentary illusion sufficient in plays never meant to provoke reflection. In "The Idler" they fulfilled every requirement. Mr. Kelcey, Nelson Wheatcroft, W. J. Lemoyne, Mrs. Charles Walcot, Effie Shannon, and others lent her most efficient support.

After this, Mr. Frohman revived the "Old

Heads and Young Hearts" of that theatrical Autolycus, Dion Boucicault. He wished, presumably, to give his company a trial in the old artificial comedy of which this piece was a more or less ingenious imitation. But the experiment was not very successful from the artistic point of view. Herbert Kelcey was a satisfactory Littleton Coke, and Charles Walcot—both these actors had a Wallack experience behind them—was capital as the explosive Col. Rocket, but W. J. Lemoyne's Jesse Rural was but a poor substitute for that of John Gilbert, and Miss Cayvan lacked the distinction that should belong to Lady Alice. Most of the minor characters were at sea. A return was quickly made to modern melodrama in the "Squire Kate" of Robert Buchanan. This play, which proved popular, was one of exceedingly unequal merit. Conventional, and not a little absurd, in its main incidents, it contained some admirable dialogue and a good feminine study in the character of Kate Thorpe, the heroine, a generous woman temporarily transformed by bitter disappointment and jealousy. It suited Miss Cayvan admirably, and she made a great hit in it. There is one scene in which Kate, who has just been beguiled into declaring her love for a young bailiff, discovers that her sister is her successful rival and overwhelms her with a

BLANCHE WHIFFEN
in "Old Heads and Young Hearts"

GEORGIA CAYVAN

HERBERT KELCEY
in "Old Heads and Young Hearts"

torrent of fiery denunciation and scorn, lashing herself into increasing frenzy until she falls exhausted and senseless. It is, of course, a bit of sheer theatricalism, but it provided just the opportunity in which Miss Cayvan could display her most effective resources. The demonstration called for physical rather than imaginative powers, and she made it with a vehemence and vigor which were exceedingly impressive. Her performance greatly helped the play and her own reputation.

She next appeared in two plays specially written for the Lyceum Theater by Sardou. The first, "Americans Abroad," was a comedy, in which an heiress pretended to be ruined in order to test her lover, and the second, "A Woman's Silence," a melodrama, whose violent incredibility was imperfectly atoned for by the ingenuity of its workmanship. Neither of them was important, and in neither of them did she appear to special advantage. In "The Amazons" of Pinero she made one of a charming trio with Bessie Tyree and Katharine Florence, but there was nothing in the part of the Lady Noel to test her real capacity. Her reputation as a leading actress was now assured, but her health failed her, and she did not live long to profit by it. Whether she would have made much further

progress in her art, had she survived, is doubtful.

Her place at the Lyceum was taken by Isabel Irving, a capable actress, less gifted by natural advantages. She appeared with Herbert Kelcey in H. A. Jones's "The Case of Rebellious Susan," but was scarcely equal to the part of the adventurous Lady Susan Harrabin. Nor was any remarkable success secured by her or the company in "The Ideal Husband" of Oscar Wilde—a characteristic work, with a brilliant beginning and feeble ending—or in "The Home Secretary" of Sidney Carton. A production of more note was "The Benefit of the Doubt," by Pinero, a remarkably clever study of contemporary social life, albeit somewhat chilling in its cynical tone. In this the acting honors were carried off by Stephen Grattan, Herbert Kelcey, Mr. Lemoyne, and Mrs. Whiffen. The general representation was marred by the excessive zeal of some of the players who overacted. Miss Irving committed the error—in a scene of semi-intoxication—of making the heroine actually drunk. In fact, the company in those days was in partial eclipse. The advent of a new leading woman, Mary Mannering, an actress of much personal charm and varied but not brilliant ability, did not help matters much. Several plays, including "The Late Mr. Castillo," "The First

Gentleman of Europe," and "The Mayflower," all of moderate quality, were produced without exciting much public enthusiasm.

A change for the better, however, came with "The Princess and the Butterfly" of A. W. Pinero. This was a brilliant but disappointing play, with scarcely a dull line in it, and much clever characterization, but no real dramatic purpose or substance. The attractive title of "The Fantastics" perhaps characterizes it most accurately. The opening scenes warranted the expectation of an impending emotional, social, or dramatic crisis of some sort, but all suggested problems were left unsolved, and a conventional ending precipitately provided with the union of three or four pairs of happy lovers. The piece owed its success primarily to the dialogue—most of the acting being undistinguished—but chiefly to the Fay Juliana of Mary Mannering, who in appearance and natural style fitted the part very neatly. It was that of a high-spirited, wayward, beautiful girl, secretly in love with the middle-aged guardian whom she plagued and puzzled. Hearing that he contemplated marriage with an ancient flame, now widowed, she yields to a fit of hysterical passion in which she unwittingly betrays the true state of her affections. This scene, written with the skill and insight of Pin-

ero at his best, was played by Miss Mannering with a realistic mimicry of girlish petulance and passion that carried conviction, and assured the popularity of the play. The fascination of her natural manner assisted in her triumph, but a large share of it was due to intelligent and forceful acting. She further established herself in public favor as the fair heroine in "Trelawney of the Wells," in which she was a most piquant figure. She played the comedy scenes charmingly, with dignity and coquettish grace, and the few emotional episodes in the Chancellor's house with spirit and sincerity. Actually the part was no severe test of her ability, but she played it like an artist and gave it life. Pinero's sparkling but somewhat unfair and ill-natured satire of the old-time actors—they were not all Vincent Crummleses—is so familiar that only the briefest reference to it can be permitted. The performance of it at the Lyceum was, on the whole, a good one. Charles Walcot, indeed—a veteran who ought to have known better—changed farce into silly travesty by his gross exaggeration of the Chancellor, but Mr. Boniface and Mrs. Walcot were delightful as the male and female "heavies." Mrs. Whiffen was in her element as a theatrical landlady, Hilda Spong was perfect as the soubrette, Bessie Tyree excellent as the

BESSIE TYREE GEORGIA CAYVAN KATHARINE FLORENCE
in "The Amazons"

E. H. SOTHERN AND W. J. LEMOYNE
in "The Highest Bidder"

young lady with genius for pantomime. E. J. Morgan lacked the Bohemian touch that should distinguish Tom Wrench, but the general representation left so agreeable an impression that it makes a convenient place to close this summary review of the Lyceum Theater.

XXV

JULIA MARLOWE AND E. H. SOTHERN

In dealing with the comparatively recent past it is somewhat difficult to avoid touching upon the present. For various reasons I wish to confine these reminiscences, as far as possible, to the nineteenth century, but occasional reference to affairs of the twentieth is inevitable. One has to be made, for instance, in the exceptional case of those twin stars, E. H. Sothern and Julia Marlowe. Both of them attained professional eminence before 1900, and both have made great advances since then in national and artistic reputation. As I write I can not think of any other theatrical performers to whom this remark would truthfully apply. The stars of the past are dead or no brighter, while those of the present are lesser luminaries altogether. The early connection of Mr. Sothern with the Lyceum Theater suggests this as the proper place for a review of his later career. His development from the lightest of farcical comedians into a popular tragedian is a remarkable phenomenon in these later days, when most successful actors

are content to be specialists in the art of playing but one character, and that their own, but has abundant precedent in the history of the older theater, in which one man in his time played many parts. Actually he passed through a course of training very similar to that which was the common experience of beginners in the old stock companies. When he began he was the veriest tyro, and he had to contend with some special disadvantages. He was mannered, he was awkward, his carriage and stature were unimposing, and his voice lacking in power and flexibility.

On the other hand, he had brains, artistic ambition, a studious disposition, and indefatigable industry. From his father—a highly accomplished comedian with tragic aspirations which were never gratified—he undoubtedly inherited a considerable share of dramatic intuition. But he never—within my experience—exhibited anything resembling genius, any flash of genuine dramatic inspiration. His progress, which was slow but constant, was to be noted chiefly in the steady improvement in his mechanism, the increasing vigor and decision of his execution, his growing confidence, and the notable development of his vocal powers. From the first he showed a lively appreciation of humorous situation and could assume, without effort, the digni-

fied self-possession of the well-bred man. He could denote cool contempt, anger, and indignation, but for a long time his passion was apt to be merely noisy, while his pathos was monotonous and artificial. The under swell of the profounder emotions he never could suggest by any magic spell of voice or gesture, but he became more and more adroit and forceful in the counterfeit of surface manifestations. During his alliance with Virginia Harned he tried his wings in various flights of romance. In "The Lady of Lyons" he was utterly unable to vitalize the gushing sentimentality of Bulwer Lytton. Alert and capable in action, he was completely beaten by the rhapsodical verse. In poetry of any kind his delivery, with its falling inflections and invariable ending upon the same mournful note, was apt to be lifeless and lugubrious. As Claude he had none of the romantic fire of Fechter or the clear and melodious diction of Kyrle Bellew. He gave an accurate but soulless copy of a traditional form.

He succeeded better in "The Sunken Bell" and "The King's Musketeers," and won something like a triumph in the "If I Were King" of Justin Huntly McCarthy, one of the best romantic dramas written in a good many years. As a vagabond poet, Villon, created Constable of

JULIA MARLOWE
as "Viola," in
"Twelfth Night"

E. H. SOTHERN
as "Villon," in
"If I Were King"

France for a week, with the certainty of death at the end of it, if in the meantime he could not win a proud princess, he acted with a spirit and variety of resource which left little to be desired. But in none of these plays, or in "The Song of the Sword," was there any intellectual problem or any of the emotions whose sources lie in the hidden well-springs of the heart. These difficulties he was to encounter when he presented himself as Hamlet in 1900. This impersonation was an unfinished product, which was to improve in respect to finish and consistency in later years, but remained essentially a good second-rate performance. What it chiefly lacked was intellectual, personal, and spiritual distinction, the touch of transforming magic that puts the seal of genius upon the work of the conscientious craftsman. It rarely descended to the level of mere mediocrity. The technical execution was, in the main, correct and prompted by carefully calculated design.

A better general effect, indeed, would have been gained if the laborious care bestowed upon minute detail had been less apparent. Anxiety over "points" betrayed him occasionally into violence of speech and gesture and painfully abrupt transitions of mood. During the opening address of the King, for instance, when plunged

in the deepest and saddest abstraction, he suddenly sprang to his feet, alert, irate, and menacing, more like Hotspur than Hamlet. Frequently during the performance there were similar injudicious—I had almost written unjustifiable—attempts to create effects by means of startling contrasts. There were flagrant errors of this sort—errors of divination rather than of inexperience—in the renunciation scene with Ophelia when he oscillated continuously between melodramatic suspicion and consuming passion. In meeting with the Ghost he solved the difficulties of the wild and whirling words by rattling them off like so much gibberish.

In the play scene his outbreak was mere *brutum fulmen*. His undiversified elocution robbed the soliloquies of all their interest and much of their sense. But he put welcome fire into the "Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave," etc.—possibly taking a hint from Fechter, and played the closing scenes with fine spirit and vigor. But these, of course, almost act themselves. He was at his best, as might have been expected, in the passages with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the actors, and the grave-diggers, where his experience as a comedian stood him in good stead. The impersonation was a notable achievement, considering all the attendant cir-

cumstances, but it only touched the surface of the real Hamlet. It did, however, point to Mr. Sothern as the chief existent hope of the poetic drama and foreshadowed his future alliance with Julia Marlowe.

It was in 1887 that Julia Marlowe, as a novice, made her first official appearance in this city as Juliet, and exhibited a dramatic intelligence that excited instant interest in her future. She raised expectations, indeed—in the mind of the present writer, at all events—which have never been completely fulfilled. It was a crude performance, naturally, but it was irradiated by unmistakable flashes of the true fire. She was a sylph-like creature, with wonderful dark eyes, a rich liquid voice, and a face charming in repose and fascinatingly eloquent in animation. To the eye she was, in many respects, an ideal Juliet.

Nine years later, when she had acquired much stage experience, she reappeared in the character, and it is of this performance, which did not differ materially from those of later years, that I now speak. It had gained much in artistic finish, smoothness, clearness, and consistency, but it had fewer of those electric flashes of natural intuition by which it had been illuminated formerly. More artistic in mechanical execution, it was less potent in virginal innocence and youth-

ful fire. Conscious design had brought with it an appearance of affectation, which in Juliet, as one dreams of her, is inconceivable. There was more than a trace of coquetry in the responsive glances with which she ogled—the word is deliberately chosen—Romeo at her first encounter with him at the ball. Excellent as was her balcony scene in many ways—charming, tender, bashful, ardent—it was marred by too frequent betrayals of artful premeditation. In the coaxing scene with the Nurse she was more wholly natural and, therefore, much more affecting and convincing, and in the chamber scene the glowing tenderness and devotion in the parting from her lover and husband were true and very touching. Her rebuke to the Nurse, "Thou hast comforted me marvelous much," was admirably delivered, with full comprehension of its ironic significance, and her hurried exit was a notable stroke. In the potion scene she rose, in her best moments, to tragic heights of emotional expression, but here again occurred unwelcome evidences of calculation in the prolongation of studied pauses and picturesque attitudes. She was not swept onward in the rush of horror-stricken imagination, as were Adelaide Neilson, Modjeska, and Stella Colas. Nevertheless, the performance, as a whole, was attractive, sympathetic, intelligent,

and capable, and established her claim to a high place among the leading Juliets of her time.

The second Shakespearean character she essayed, in 1887, was that of Viola in "Twelfth Night," which, in after years, was to become one of her most popular impersonations. Her beauty and youth were important factors in this performance. She succeeded best in her scenes with Orsino, in which she sounded a pathetic note with richness and certainty. Elsewhere, and even in her maturity, she never fully grasped the more delicate and poetic elements of the character. She played it too much in the mood of Rosalind. Her vivacity and humor carried her successfully through the comic adventures, but the essential feminine charm of it frequently eluded her. The part of Parthenia in "Ingomar" fell very easily within the scope of her abilities. She had not all of the unusual physical qualifications of Mary Anderson, but was almost as liberally endowed with personal charm and was fully as well provided with artistic resources. The dash of natural feminine coquetry, which jarred in Juliet, was appropriate enough in the early scenes with the Barbarian, which she played capitally.

Her earlier interpretations of Rosalind were curiously destitute of promise. This character,

like Hamlet, is one in which few players have ever failed absolutely, and when she first represented it here in 1890 she pleased by the freshness and girlishness which she gave to it. But her performance had no glamor of romance, poetry, or distinction. About Rosalind herself hangs no particular mystery. She is an entirely and delightfully human figure, but she moves in a romantic and poetic atmosphere, which must be preserved if any sort of illusion is to be created for a highly improbable story. Rosalind was never one of Miss Marlowe's happiest achievements, but it grew in grace and authority as the years rolled by. It never attained the daintiness, refinement, or imaginative humor of Modjeska's or the vitality and sincerity of Henrietta Crosman's, but in the end it was an interesting and capable, if never inspired, portrayal. Julia in "The Hunchback"—which all novices of twenty-five years ago felt themselves obliged to play—was another character in which, at first, she was heavily overweighted, but some of her emotional work in it, if crude, was decidedly impressive. In 1896, with her first husband, Robert Taber, she appeared in "She Stoops to Conquer," playing Miss Hardcastle with archness and spirit and plentiful technical efficiency. She was a bewitching figure, but her acting still dis-

played self-consciousness, and was a performance rather than an embodiment.

Next she engaged in a peculiarly audacious and profitless experiment in undertaking the part of the Prince of Wales in "King Henry IV," which is masculine in its every fiber. Of course, she could not look, speak, or act it. Presumably, she wished to give her husband, Robert Taber, a chance to play Hotspur, which he did fairly well, but not brilliantly. The one redeeming feature of this revival was the Falstaff of William F. Owen, which, though an unfinished sketch, was really racy, unctuous, and vital, with the right liquorish flavor, and something of the rumbling resonance of speech and laughter naturally associted with the girth of this unwieldy and jovial old profligate. It put all recent impersonations of the character completely in the shade, and undoubtedly was the best in this part of the world since Hackett's. Theatrical fate has seldom been more ironical than in condemning a creation of this value to pass almost unnoticed in a representation otherwise incapable and irreverent.

In "Bonnie Prince Charlie," an adaptation of "Les Jacobites" of François Coppée, Miss Marlowe appeared as a patriotic blind beggar girl passionately devoted to the Young Pretender

and his cause. For him she vainly sacrificed home, faith, character, love, and life. The piece was romantic melodrama of a superior order, but was overladen by dialogue (which only dimly reflected the original French) and did not long survive. Miss Marlowe's performance was a good one of its kind, not deficient either in power or pathos, but was not extraordinary in any way, and added nothing to her reputation. She won much more substantial success in the "Barbara Frietchie" of Cylde Fitch, which was an extravagant melodramatic invention remotely suggested by Whittier's poem.

With the original Barbara the new heroine had nothing whatever to do, either in age or experience. She was a lovely young woman, involved in most of the tribulations incidental to civil war, and central in a succession of those purely artificial, but often exceedingly effective, theatrical situations which Mr. Fitch devised with such prolific ingenuity. Nothing in the character presented insuperable difficulties to an actress of Miss Marlowe's experience, and she played it excellently. As an impulsive, passionate, coquettish, tender, high-spirited Southern girl, she was altogether fascinating in her earlier love scenes and in the melodramatic incidents she acted with picturesque vigor and a variety of emotional power which won for her a decisive popular success.

E. H. SOTHERN AND JULIA MARLOWE
in "Romeo and Juliet"

By this time she had long been recognized as a fixed star of considerable magnitude in a theatrical firmament in which planets were very few and far between. But she assumed a new prominence when she allied herself, matrimonially and professionally, with E. H. Sothern. This partnership, not so much on account of what it accomplished as on account of what it proved, was one of the most significant occurrences in recent theatrical history. It put an end to the pretense that there was no longer any popular demand for the classic drama, and that Shakespeare spelt ruin except when associated with stars of exceptional brilliancy, such as Edwin Booth, Henry Irving, or Ellen Terry. This has been the parrot cry of commercial managers from time immemorial. It was raised when the Kembles passed away, when Macready, Charles Kean, Samuel Phelps, Edwin Booth, and Henry Irving died. Never did it have the slightest foundation in fact. Shakespeare has made money for all sorts of actors and managers, at all sorts of times and in all sorts of conditions. But the public, no more than connoisseurs, will pay money to see him butchered. The most ardent admirers of Julia Marlowe and E. H. Sothern will scarcely claim for them a place among the most famous of Shakespearean actors. They

have had the field to themselves, have shone more brightly in the absence of greater lights, but their individual achievements have been worthy, rather than exceptional. No production of theirs has been comparable in respect of all-around artistic excellence with those of Henry Irving. They have appeared occasionally in parts which manifestly, tested by any exacting standard, were beyond their capabilities. But they have done nothing ill. All their representations have borne the marks of liberal, conscientious, and capable management, with the result that they have played for many seasons, with great profit and honor, to crowded houses. Now they have retired honorably to enjoy the fruits of their labors.

When the New Theater was opened, they were selected as the chief representatives of the higher drama to play in "Antony and Cleopatra." That was not a fortunate choice, but it afforded striking testimony to the assured position they had won. The day has not yet come for any deliberate critical estimate of their work in collaboration. It began appropriately with "Romeo and Juliet," in which Miss Marlowe demonstrated that she had not purchased experience at the cost of youth or beauty. Since then they have ventured courageously upon some of the most diffi-

cult tasks in the whole Shakespearean repertory. To say that they have always satisfied the highest ideals would be foolish flattery, but they have provided substantial pleasure to thousands of Shakespeare lovers, maintained the dignity of the stage, and contributed object-lessons of incalculable value to the general public.

XXVI

ROBERT MANTELL, MRS. FISKE, ROSE COGHLAN, AND OTHERS

The names of Sothern and Marlowe naturally suggest that of Robert Mantell, a fellow laborer in the field of Shakespearean drama. For more than thirty years he has occupied a prominent position upon the American stage, but nearly the whole of his professional prime was passed in the West, and except to the older generation he was comparatively unknown in New York until long after the period to which these reminiscences are confined. His Shakespearean performances here have been the subject of such recent and plentiful comment that any particular review of him at this time would be reiterative, superfluous, and tiresome. Wishing to be as honest as I can, I must confess that they have been to me, personally, a source of great disappointment, chiefly because of unfulfilled expectation, but he has pleased many thousands, and has carried the banner of Shakespeare far and wide, to his own great credit and reward. There was a time when I hoped and thought that he

ROBERT MANTELL
as "King John"

might prove the great tragic actor of his generation. He came to this country in the early eighties from England, where he already enjoyed a considerable provincial reputation—and there were good judges in the English provinces in those days—on account of his youthful achievements in romantic and tragic drama. Few men had been more liberally equipped by nature for characters of the heroic type. His form was tall, well knit, and graceful, his face expressive and attractive, his carriage and manner refined, and his voice singularly flexible, powerful, and melodious.

He made his first appearance here in support of Fanny Davenport, then in her ripest beauty, who was making the first start in her stellar career as the heroine in Sardou's "Fédora." The occasion was a notable one. A representative New York audience, including a host of Miss Davenport's friends and admirers, filled every seat in the house, and enthusiasm over the fair heroine was rampant. Every possible preparation had been made to give her a good "send-off." A good, though never a great, actress, she played effectively, winning plentiful and hearty applause, and all went well until the crucial scene of the discovery, between Fédora and Loris, in which the former was to win her crowning

triumph. Up to this point Mr. Mantell had won the kindly regard of the house by his refined, intelligent, and natural acting, but had necessarily remained somewhat in the background. But at this crisis, after an impressive exhibition of rising wrath held in curb, he delivered himself of an outburst of scorn and passion that galvanized the house, and left Fédora overwhelmed and almost forgotten. At that moment he might have prevailed over Bernhardt herself.

It was a dazzling bit of work, all the more effective because so utterly unlooked for. And that it was no mere accident, but the legitimate result of trained skill directed by emotional impulse, was clearly proved by his later success in the "Dakolar," an adaptation from "Le Maître des Forges," by Steele Mackaye. This was in some respects, from the purely theatrical point of view, an improvement upon the original. That is to say, it increased and intensified theatrical situations. In these Mr. Mantell proved himself master of strength both in repose and action. Some of his paroxysms of passion were thrilling in their truth and vigor, while in quieter and pathetic passages he showed himself capable of both dignity and tenderness. Moreover, he had that freedom and picturesqueness of gesture which are such important elements in romantic

acting. These qualities, with the intelligence he displayed in the use of them, fully justified the belief that he would make his mark in poetic tragedy, which is but a superior development of romantic melodrama. Beyond question, he had in him the makings of a really great actor, and it is a pity that circumstances, in the formative period of his career, kept him for so many years from the metropolitan stage. In that long exile he acquired great experience and an imposing repertory, but grew little in artistic stature. His execution gained in precision and authority, but became mannered. His acting lost the old glow of inspiration. He learned to rely more and more upon exaggerated points—always sure of a round of applause from the gallery—and he strained his voice until it lost much of its flexibility and mellowness.

When he first returned to the East he still retained many of his distinctive characteristics, and when at his best revealed himself as an uncommonly fine actor. In the robuster tragic parts—such as Lear, Macbeth, or Othello—he frequently created effects far beyond the reach of Mr. Sothern or any other living American actor, but these were too often the result of physical prowess rather than imaginative perception, and his impersonations were apt to be of

very uneven merit. Romeo, a character which suited him admirably, he played with success until far advanced in middle life. He fully comprehended the romance, ardor, and passion of it. His Hamlet, striking in spots, was, on the whole, conventional and uninspired. It was intelligent, but not intellectual or imaginative. King John, in which Macready, Charles Kean, and Phelps were all famous, was a sealed book to him. But he gave a vigorous melodramatic interpretation of Richard III. He won public acceptance also as Richelieu and Louis XI. It is in romantic action and the portrayal of the simple, direct emotions that his faculties have been displayed to best advantage, but there is no character of really first-rate magnitude with which his name is intimately associated, and although his professional career has been honorable and successful and, perhaps in a barren period, distinguished, it can scarcely be defined as illustrious.

I can not pretend to mention even the names of all the players more or less prominent during the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century. Some of them won popularity by their suitability to one type of character to which they steadily adhered—not being actors at all in the full sense of that abused word. Others profited by a pleasing personality, many more by the ingenious and

unscrupulous art of advertisement. These all belonged to the order of the third rate. It is only necessary now to speak particularly of a few of the best-known or best-qualified performers. At the head of this latter division I should unhesitatingly place Rose Coghlan, who won her earliest laurels as leading lady at Wallack's. She is one of the many good actresses graduated in the school of burlesque. Whether she could have succeeded in high tragedy is uncertain, but in the broad fields of comedy and melodrama she long ago proved herself thoroughly expert and capable. Her Lady Teazle was one of the best witnessed by this generation, and her Rosalind, if not ideal, was in many respects a delightful impersonation.

In a brilliant performance of "London Assurance" her Lady Gay Spanker was one of the most conspicuous ornaments. The exuberant spirit of it was altogether vital, alluring and spontaneous. In the "Forget-Me-Not" of Merivale she enacted the adventuress, not, indeed, with the superfine polish and keen intellectual edge of Geneviève Ward, but with splendid color and vigor. The cynical audacity and readiness of the woman were most boldly and skilfully denoted. As Clara Douglas in Bulwer Lytton's "Money" she was as languishing and sentimen-

tally tender as could be wished. In the ultra-melodramatic "Jocelyn," specially devised to exhibit the wide range of her talents, she played with a varied power of passion and pathos which imparted momentary substance to windy rubbish. It was often her lot to be the sole attraction of a worthless play, but she rarely failed to make the best use of any opportunity offered her.

She gave a particularly fine performance of Mrs. Arbuthnot, for instance, in the clever, flashy, tricky "A Woman of No Importance" of Oscar Wilde. When the vilely mismanaged production of the "Ulysses" of Stephen Phillips was brought to the verge of instant collapse on the first night by the utter incapacity of nearly all concerned in it, she restored a mocking and impatient audience to interest and sobriety by the dignified poise, eloquence, and pathos of her Penelope. In the estimation of the public—the soundest of critics in the long run—she has always stood high. Whether or not she has herself been in any way responsible for her failure to hold constantly the place upon the metropolitan stage to which she is entitled by her ability and performance it is not my province to know or inquire, but she is a sterling actress.

I approach the subject of Mrs. Fiske with diffi-

dence, not that I am in any way in doubt about it, but because I find myself pretty nearly in the position of the one obstinate juror. He may be often, perhaps generally is, wrong, but if he is convinced, he can not change his verdict. So I shall register mine for what it is worth. The very essence of acting, to my mind, lies in the capacity of assumption and impersonation of a conceived character and personality different from that of the player. Perfect metamorphosis, in body and spirit, is an idealism very rarely, if ever, possible of achievement, but some actors have come very close to it. The Salvini of Othello was unrecognizable in the Salvini of Conrad. Phelps was one man as Henry IV, another as Shallow, a third as Baillie Nicholl Jarvie. W. J. Florence could and did disguise himself completely. Such instances might be multiplied, but they are exceptional. To demand or expect such transformations habitually would be ridiculous and idiotic. But in all serious acting, in every case, that is, where the playwright has elaborated a character markedly individual and peculiar in habit, thought, and conduct, the player, if he would be considered an actor, must make some attempt to embody and signify, so far as in him lies, the outward and inward attributes of that character. It often happens that the personality

of an actor coincides very closely and neatly with that of the fictitious character, and the result is an effective and satisfactory impersonation.

Hundreds of our players, and not a few of our stars, never dream of acting anybody but themselves. The consequence is that the spectators get no definite idea of Macbeth or Benedick, but only learn how Mr. Smith or Mr. Jones thinks he would comport himself in similar circumstances. In other words, the player who is content to express every character, no matter how diverse, in terms of his own individual habits, ideas, and impulses, trusting simply to external disguise for identification, is not a genuine impersonator or actor at all, although he may be himself an exceedingly interesting personality and uncommonly expert in self-illustration. In the many years that I have been writing about the theater this is one of the tests by which I have always abided in trying to form a just estimate of relative performances. A little reflection will show that the more marked are the traits in the individual personality of the player, the more incumbent it is upon him to suppress them in characters to which they are not appropriate, especially when those characters have different and equally strongly marked traits of their own.

One of the reasons why I have never been able

to join in the unqualified praise so liberally bestowed upon the performances of Mrs. Fiske is that upon the application of this test she has failed to reveal any distinct evidences of genuine impersonation. In all her "creations" she has presented her own identity without any substantial modification of speech, gesture, look, or manner. Situations, circumstances, differed, not the personality. It may be granted unreservedly that that personality was uncommon, piquant, provocative, and interesting and exceedingly effective in parts with which it happened to be in accordance. Her bright, inquisitive, slightly aggressive, manner, her decisive movements and snappy utterances were admirably adapted to the light comedies—such as "Featherbrain"—in which she first won public favor. In that line her early work was full of promise. But her ambition, which was active and dauntless, inclined her to the more serious and emotional dramas, for which she had not the necessary histronic or artistic qualifications. Her elocution was faulty and did not lend itself readily to emotional expression. She could be imperious, sarcastic, fiery, and angry, but the deeper notes of passion she could not sound, and her pathos was hard and hollow, without the true ring.

She made her first essay in social melodrama

in the "In Spite of All" of Steele Mackaye in 1887, but then she was clearly out of her element. In 1896, when she appeared in "Césarine," a version of "La Femme de Claude" of the younger Dumas, she had advanced greatly in stage knowledge and confidence, but early habits were hardening already into confirmed mannerisms. Some phases of Césarine's character—those which lay on the surface—the deceitfulness, callousness, and vindictiveness—to be reproduced later in Becky Sharp—came easily within her compass, but the plausibility, the passion, and the fascination were beyond her grasp. In "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," in which she had the invaluable support of that fine actor Charles Coghlan, she found a part in which she was very successful. She had not the physical qualifications, nor the proper emotional power, but she played it with comprehensive intelligence.

At such moments as those of her discovery of her husband's ignorance of her fall, and of the return of the supposedly dead Angel Clare, her simulation of dumb fear, amazement, and perplexity was excellent. Her terror after the murder was overwrought. She was not at all the Tess of Hardy, but she gave an interesting performance. In Magda her limitations were sharply defined. Apparently wishing to emphasize the

self-confidence and intellectual freedom of the famous singer, she made her rude, arrogant, cynical, and selfish. Her contemptuous indifference to her old father and stepmother would have been impossible to an accomplished, enlightened, well-bred woman. Here was a radical mistake in interpretation. Her treatment of the parson again was marked, not by good-tempered but somewhat cynical raillery, but by a downright insolence wholly inconsistent with her subsequent confession. She succeeded better in her scene with the hypocritical Von Keller, her spirited dismissal of him from the house giving her an opportunity to which she was fully equal; but of the deeper inner workings of Magda's soul—the conflicts in the heart of the woman and mother—she gave little or no indication. Throughout, the manner of Magda was the manner of Tess, of Césarine, and of Minnie Maddern Fiske.

In 1889 Mrs. Fiske, in pursuit of what it is still the fashion to call the new realism—as if realism had ever been absent from the stage—appeared in a one-act tenement study, by Horace B. Fry, called "Little Italy." It was a squalid but not unpowerful sketch of conjugal infidelity, in which an Italian wife, about to flee with her lover, is accidentally killed in an attempt to

escape from her enraged husband, who has surprised the erring pair. It was charged with violence and tropical passion. The performance was made worth while by the finely vigorous emotional acting of Frederic de Belleville as the outraged husband. Mrs. Fiske, as the wife, was admirably "made up" and mimicked the manner of an Italian woman of the poorer classes with much cleverness. She gave bold and veracious emphasis, also, to the amorous abandonment of the character. But in dealing with the elemental emotions of the more melodramatic episodes a relapse into her habitual mannerisms destroyed all illusion. What was needed then was a dash of the primeval passion, the gripping sincerity, with which Duse glorified Santuzza. This she could not supply. The announcement, in 1899, of her approaching appearance as Becky Sharp in a new stage version of "Vanity Fair" excited much public interest. There was general expectation, in which the present writer shared, that the part was one into which she would fit neatly. This was not fulfilled to any considerable degree. Becky was Mrs. Fiske in new surroundings, and she was little more.

The play itself, inevitably, was a travesty of the original, as almost every consideration had been sacrificed to the prominence of the inimi-

MINNIE MADDERN FISKE

CHARLES COGHLAN
as "Orlando," in "As You Like It"

ROSE COGHLAN

table little blackleg. She, at least, was preserved in something like her true form. But Mrs. Fiske could not animate it. She gave it briskness, intelligence, intrepidity, volubility, and hardness—all the familiar characteristics of her habitual stage methods—but nothing, or barely a trace, of the supple hypocrisy, the mock sentiment, the artful coquetry, the ready guile, the sparkle, the fascination, the venom, and the fury which are conspicuous elements in the composition of this complex creature. On the printed page Becky is alive and real in every fiber, but only an actress of consummate versatility and endless resource could hope to vitalize her on the stage. The histrionic formulas of Mrs. Fiske could express but few of her many facets.

Mrs. Fiske next assumed the part of Miranda in "Miranda of the Balcony," a romantic melodrama of the most extravagant type. Miranda was a paragon of beauty and all earthly accomplishments, who, being happily rid of an unspeakable husband—supposed to be immured in a Moorish dungeon—orders the man whom she madly loves to rescue him at the peril of his own life. The absurdity and inconsistencies of the plot could only be justified by the theatrical value of the emotions which they occasioned. To the realization of these torturing and diverse

emotions, Mrs. Fiske's stereotyped methods were wholly inadequate, but in the less exacting scenes she played with the intelligent intent, if restricted executive ability, manifest in all her work. She acted many parts, including some of Ibsen's, before and after those mentioned here, but present reference to them is unnecessary. In none of them did she exhibit any perceptible development of dramatic power or versatility. As an ambitious and clever woman, with a genuine if not always well-directed zeal for theatrical progress, she has played a prominent part in contemporary stage history, but as an actress her achievements have been in no way extraordinary.

Not all the best actors of the period of which I have been speaking were among the performers of the greatest notoriety, or those whose names were most frequently displayed in the public prints. Even such a fugitive record as this would be incomplete without special reference to some of the less well-advertised luminaries. Charles Coghlan, of whose achievements in Charles Surface and other characters some mention has been made, was one of the best all-round actors of his generation. He was infinitely superior to any of the leading men of his era or of the stars of to-day. If he had not absolute genius he had an intuition which was closely akin to it, and ample

physical resources to illustrate his ideals. In poetic romance, melodrama, and artificial and social comedy he was without a rival, but in tragedy his best faculties seemed to suffer paralysis. Whether the deliberation of his method—the ever-present but artfully concealed design behind his action—or a dread of ranting acted as a bar to inspiration, certain it is that in tragedy he could never let himself go. In his early days, when he was with the Bancrofts, he essayed a naturalistic Shylock with disastrous consequences, although the critics recognized the originality and intellectuality of his performance. Acting here, many years later, with Mrs. Langtry, he essayed Macbeth, and again failed decisively. Yet his impersonation was full of brains and imagination.

His "make-up" showed a pale, saturnine, eager face, framed in dark, short, wavy hair, a countenance in which craft was mingled with resolution. He made it plain that the salutations of the weird sisters chimed with thoughts already harbored in his breast, and that he was more affected by the coincidence than by the novelty of their suggestion. He was not, however, quite ripe for murder, although the meditation of it did not greatly horrify him. The train of his thought prompting the soliloquy after

the disappearance of the witches was indicated with surprising skill and rare significance of facial expression. He was wholly successful in the encounter with Duncan and the ensuing scene with his wife, and was particularly effective in the soliloquy, "If 't were done," etc. He interpreted the dagger scene in quite the right spirit of rapt brooding, and, though his acting after the murder was tame, he delivered the "Who can be wise, temperate, and amazed," etc., with notable ability. But after that—except at the moment of the appearance of Banquo's ghost—his acting fell off terribly, being woefully deficient in animation, dramatic power, and emotional eloquence. In such plays as "The Lady of Lyons," "A Wife's Peril," and "Lady Clancarty" he played with all his old finish, intelligence, and fire, putting a complete extinguisher upon the star, Mrs. Langtry, whom he was supposed to be supporting. Afterward he won great success in "The Royal Box," his own adaptation of "Kean," in which he made an astonishing display of theatrical virtuosity.

An actor of kindred but not quite so fine caliber is John Mason. His best work has been done in the twentieth century, and is too recent, therefore, to be discussed here, but by pretty general consent he is the most capable all-round actor on

the American boards to-day. It is to be noted that he got his early training in one of the last great stock companies, that of the Boston Museum. There he absorbed the experience that was to qualify him for every department of the drama—tragedy, artificial and modern social comedy, or melodrama. His individual work, even in inferior plays, is always notable for its superior artistry. Not particularly versatile, in the Protean sense, having a strong and self-assertive personality, he has a plentiful variety of method, while his executive skill is manifested alike in boldness of outline and delicacy of detail. He can exhibit robust forcefulness or intellectual subtlety. In his passionate outbursts there is the ring of true sincerity, and he is admirable in scenes of dignified gravity or pathos. In humor he is not exuberant, but his appreciation of it is keen, and his interpretation of it, especially in the vein of irony, facile, sure, and effective. With actual genius, perhaps, he has not been endowed. It may be doubted whether he could successfully embody the greatest tragic creations of poetic fancy, but he possesses the clear intelligence and the finished craftsmanship which are excellent substitutes for inspiration and often much more trustworthy.

XXVII

THE KENDALS, HENRIETTA CROSMAN, AND MARGARET ANGLIN

Henrietta Crosman is an actress who is entitled to more general critical and popular appreciation than she has obtained. She is an exceedingly bright and capable performer, of considerable range and much technical expertness. Spontaneous vivacity is one of the potent charms in her various embodiments. Her Nell Gwynn, in one of the wildest plays ever concocted, will long be remembered for its variety, its animation, its delightful deviltry, and its general fascination. It was the work of an actress versed in every trick of her trade. But her greatest artistic achievement was her Rosalind, which I have always considered one of the most satisfying expositions of the character I have seen. It had not the dainty refinement and poetic grace of Modjeska's, but it was wonderfully alive and illusive. If the humor of it was a trifle too brusque and modern—just a little out of harmony with the romantic atmosphere—it was at all events delightfully real and human, without the least tinge of coarseness. And the imper-

sonation lacked no element of feminine charm. If not superlatively dainty and imaginative, it was graceful and eminently attractive. The dash of coquetry in the scenes with Orlando was tempered by very pretty, maidenly, and genuine sentiment. The mannishness was always girlish. The few emotional notes were full and rich, and the text was admirably spoken.

It has been suggested—not quite justly, I think —that Miss Crosman owed much of her success to the experience she gained when she acted Celia to the Rosalind of Ada Rehan. If so, she greatly bettered her instruction. Her delivery of the lines was infinitely more varied in intonation and point, and all her "business" much more suggestive of spontaneous impulse. The illusion she created was manifested in the instant and hearty response of her audience. It was a first-rate performance.

Margaret Anglin is an actress of whom much may yet be expected, but who has not yet fully redeemed the promise of her novitiate. She has, beyond question, rare gifts of emotional expression, a special aptitude for refined comedy, an attractive presence, and the charm of an intelligent and cultivated woman. She has done some exceedingly powerful and impressive work, but any present attempt to define her full capacity

would be premature. Her essays in poetic comedy and romance have been only moderately successful, and it is doubtful whether she could reach the heights or depths of tragedy. The probability is that her true sphere lies within the extensive domain of social comedy. The position of Maude Adams upon the stage is unique. Few actresses of any time have achieved such wide popularity with the aid of so limited dramatic capital. For years she has enjoyed preeminence among contemporary stars. She owes this partly to the arts of management, partly to the skill with which she employs the resources at her command, but chiefly to the ingratiating power of an uncommon and fascinating personality. She made her first great hit twenty years ago by her tactful, humorous, and inoffensive interpretation of a scene of semi-intoxication. Since then she has advanced rapidly in stardom, but very little, if at all, in dramatic art, except in the matter of technique. It is impossible to describe in words the spell exerted by her manner—half-pert, half-timid, and wholly sympathetic—or her piquant features. She is fragile, alert, timorous, audacious, quaint, quizzical, tender, waspish. She has an impish humor, at once sparkling and dry; a vein of pathos—somewhat shallow—temper, and girlish freshness.

There is an air about her of sweetness and innocence. She can be joyous, arch, petulant, provocative, indignant, but not passionate. Over the deeper emotions she has no control, and for all her moods she has but one mode of expression. It follows that her personality is complex, but not versatile. She repeats herself charmingly, but incessantly. What she was in "The Little Minister" she has been virtually in all her other parts. She expresses all personalities in terms of her own, and therefore is not an interpreter, but, even in parts with which she has no affinity, she is not monotonous. Cast in characters so absolutely without her range, as Juliet and Chanticler, she excited the feeling of compassion rather than ridicule. Clearly she was doomed, by cold speculation, to cope with the impossible. It was in the whimsical, delicate, suggestive creations of Barrie that she found her golden opportunity.

Of the various English actors who visited this country as stars during the closing years of the nineteenth century, Henry Irving was by far the most famous and significant. Moreover, he was for so long closely identified with the American stage that he might almost be said to have belonged to it. For both reasons, considerable space has been devoted to his representations,

most of which, in themselves, had intrinsic literary and dramatic importance. It will not be necessary to dwell minutely upon any of the others. The first of them, chronologically, was Wilson Barrett, who already is almost forgotten. He was a shrewd and clever showman, made a great splurge and much money, but as an actor never rose above the second class. He depended chiefly upon sensationalism, spectacle, sentimentalism, and advertisement, and he played his cards very well. In "The Silver King" he had a really good melodrama—highly improbable, of course, but well knit, ingenious, continuously exciting, and full of adroitly calculated suspense—and embodied the hero with no little picturesqueness and force, though he was easily excelled in the part by Osmund Tearle, a player of no special distinction. "The Sign of the Cross," which made his fortune, was gorgeous melodramatic spectacle, seasoned with sentimental claptrap devoid of all sincerity.

At first, after contemptuous press notices, it was threatened with instant collapse, whereupon he issued invitations and free passes to religious ministers of all denominations, many of whom rhapsodized, in their pulpits, over the moral lesson which they discovered in it. The experiment proved one of the most successful advertis-

ing schemes on record—it has been tried more than once since then with less satisfactory returns—and the piece was played to full houses for many hundred nights. In "Claudian," constructed upon similar principles, he reaped further profit and notoriety. In both pieces he gave a workmanlike, agreeable, but entirely undistinguished performance. In "The Manxman" and "Ben-my-Chree" he did nothing more remarkable. He exhibited repose, passion, and pathos, but not in any degree beyond the reach of any ordinarily experienced and capable actor. It was in "Hamlet" that the fullest exposure was made of his dramatic and artistic insignificance. A more utterly prosaic, laborious, and trivial interpretation of the character was never seen. The lack of comprehension displayed in it was almost shocking. The reflective, melancholy "sweet prince" posed, gesticulated, and ranted like the hero of a modern melodrama, whose one anxiety was to keep himself in the middle of the limelight. It is pleasant to be able to add that the presumptuous travesty found no general acceptance either with the critics or the public.

Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, who made their first appearance here in 1889, were accomplished artists of very different caliber. Nearly fifty years have slipped away since I first saw them on the

stage. She—Madge Robertson then—was a fresh young beauty, scarcely out of her teens, and was playing at the London Haymarket Theater, as leading lady to E. A. Sothern, in "The Romance of a Poor Young Man." Already she was recognized as one of the rising actresses of the day. In a few years she had gained the position, which she thereafter held, of leading actress on the English comedy stage. W. S. Kendal, in the late sixties, was noted for nothing but his good looks. In face and figure he was ornamental, and, therefore, in request for small parts, but as an actor—it can do no harm to say so now—he was a terrible stick For years after his marriage he was completely overshadowed by his brilliant wife, but improved steadily and finally shared histrionic honors with her pretty equally. In some respects, I think, he came to be the finer artist of the two. He was the less "mannered" and self-conscious, and, in the end, more versatile, but in moments of violent emotion or deep pathos she could sound a deeper and fuller note than he. In scenes of comedy they were exceedingly well matched. Both had finesse, authority, sufficient emotional force for all but the most exacting situations, and a most agreeable suavity and ease of manner. They were, in brief, sound actors and exceedingly well-trained artists, inca-

pable of the grosser expedients, which command the applause of the uncultivated crowd, but are equally offensive to nature and good taste. Neither of them ever exhibited any proof of imaginative genius. They did not excel in plays demanding a dash of romantic coloring. They belonged to the realistic school in experience and capacity, and were seen at their best in plays which may be grouped under the head of superior domestic melodrama.

They were not particularly fortunate in the selection which they made for their first appearance in this city. This was "A Scrap of Paper," in which their somewhat prosaic style was brought into direct contrast with one much more highly colored and imaginative. Virtually the play was identical with that given at Wallack's, except for a change of names and localities from French to English. It may be admitted readily that, from the English point of view, the Kendal representation was right in tone and spirit, but it was, in almost every way, much less brilliant and effective. Between the Prosper Couramont of Lester Wallack and the Col. Blake of Mr. Kendal there was an immense gulf. Mr. Wallack sinned, doubtless, in the matter of self-consciousness, from which Mr. Kendal was entirely free, but in his superb repose, perfect non-

chalance, and artfully measured speech and gesture, which gave effect to every shade of meaning in the dialogue and made repartee flash like lightning, he suggested instantly the man of resolution and resource masquerading as a trifler, and offered a guaranty of the truth of his tales of travel and adventure.

Mr. Kendal revealed none of that fine and nimble quality which distinguishes light and sparkling from the tamer, if more realistic, comedy. His Col. Blake had no halo of romance, no flavor of cosmopolitan experience. He was not even military, but just a jovial, sturdy, everyday Englishman of the clubs and moors. But he was easy, natural, refined, and manly, and conveyed the impression of a rock-bottomed sincerity. In his duel of wits with Susan Hartley (Susanne) his delivery of the dialogue in respect of humor and emphasis, could not be compared with that of Wallack, and in receiving the challenge from the jealous boy his air of good-natured ridicule, if it had the merit of being natural in the case of one so much the bigger and stronger of the two, was not nearly as effective as the magnificent condescension of the American actor. Nor was the Susan of Mrs. Kendal as brilliant as that of Rose Coghlan. It never quite reached the height of hysterical emotion,

with its wonderful blend of tears and laughter, attained by the latter in her scene with the infuriated husband, but it was richer in purely feminine attributes. The womanliness of it was very real. And the archness of Mrs. Kendal was as delightful as her tenderness was unaffected. In her great scene with the jealous husband, if she fell just short of Miss Coghlan's remarkable effort, she exhibited genuine feeling and notable artistic probity.

The skill with which she denoted her sense of the humor of the situation, amid the whirl of conflicting emotions, was of a very high order. Her cajolery was a striking illustration of the wiles at a pretty woman's command, and her final confession of love was uttered with a fragmentary and breathless volubility altogether natural. The whole performance was eminently capable. E. M. Dodson furnished a remarkable character study of the old naturalist—a beautifully finished sketch. Mr. Wenman was most efficient as the jealous husband, and Violet Vanbrugh played the suspected wife very prettily and well.

In "The Iron Master" the Kendals came into their own. This, it will be remembered, was an adaptation, and an uncommonly skilful one, by A. W. Pinero, from "Le Maître de Forges" of Georges Ohnet, which in some respects was supe-

rior to the original. The story is too well known to need analysis. Mrs. Kendal comprehended the part of the heroine perfectly and played it with a most sympathetic sincerity. In the trying scene in which her worthless lover's perfidy is explained to her with every refinement of feminine malice, she portrayed the struggle between wounded love and natural pride with rare perception, truthfulness, and histrionic skill. There was poignant anguish in every motion of her swaying figure and in the lines of her tortured face, and her resolute rally from a threatened faint was an eloquent illustration of high moral courage vanquishing physical weakness. But her recovery was somewhat too sudden and complete. In the second act, after the midnight marriage, her outburst of remorse and despair lacked the true throb and thrill, being only shrill and loud.

Her acting in the ensuing scene with her husband was very clever. Shame, terror, aversion, were all expressed in her attitude of strained and dazed expectancy. Her half-involuntary shrinking from his proffered embrace, her increasing humiliation, and her final desperate admission of the truth of his suspicion that she still loved the man who had abandoned her, were all well conceived and executed, and finely consistent. In the third act her growing love and admiration

MR. AND MRS. KENDALL
in "A Scrap of Paper"

WILSON BARRETT
as "The Silver King"

for her husband were denoted by acting of very high and sympathetic quality.

But the real triumph of this representation was won by Mr. Kendal, of whom little was expected, and who demonstrated himself a most sterling artist. The gentleness and simple courtesy with which he treated his unwilling bride in the second act denoted keen artistic intuition, being thoroughly consonant with the ascribed character of the ironmaster, and he depicted the slow awakening of suspicion in his mind with a delicacy of gradation possible only to a thoughtful and thoroughly accomplished actor. When the whole truth was forced upon him, he rose to a pitch of mingled sorrow, wrath, and indignation positively startling in an actor from whom nothing of the sort was looked for, and reached it, moreover, without the least suggestion of rant or overstrain, or any loss of personal dignity; and, having attained to this high level, he never sank below it. Throughout the ensuing act he maintained toward his wife a kindly, polished dignity which could scarcely have been improved upon, continuing, meanwhile, with admirable subtlety, to suggest the love which still possessed him. In the episode of the necklace there was a pathos in his smothered emotion which few comedians could hope to emulate, and in the meeting with

his wife, before the duel, he carried off the chief honors of the scene. He eclipsed all other performances of the character in this city either in French or English.

A detailed description of all the parts played by the Kendals in this city would involve much tedious and useless repetition. Most of them differed in detail rather than in type, and the execution of the players, while proving the adaptability of their art to varying circumstances, made no revelation of unsuspected capacities. "The Ironmaster" brought out the best that was in them. That play established for them a reputation which they did nothing to lessen or greatly increase. In "The Squire" of Pinero Mr. Kendal had little to do, but did that little excellently, while Mrs. Kendal, as the heroine, presented a fine type of frank, generous, devoted, pure, and self-reliant womanhood, full of feeling, but entirely free from mawkish sentiment. As a whole her embodiment was charming and able, but there were spots where her powers of emotional utterance were not able to meet fully all the demands made upon them. One of these occurred in the scene where she was supposed to be overwhelmed by the news of Eric Thorndyke's first marriage.

Here she exhibited too much consciousness of the possibilities of mere theatrical device, too

much solicitude for the pictorial correctness of her pose. The swaying of her body was unduly prolonged, and her gestures generally too deliberate. But these flaws would not have been noticeable in a less meritorious achievement. She was less severely tried in "The Weaker Sex" of Pinero, and consequently more completely successful. Here the story, as may be remembered, is of a woman who married unhappily for money —after jilting a poorer lover for that purpose— and afterward, as a widow, rediscovers her first and only love, only to find him betrothed to her own daughter. It is a tricky and improbable plot, but smartly written, with some lively satire on the sex question and a variety of telling situations. Her impersonation was exceptional on account of its physical beauty, its refinement of manner—a manifestation not too common among aristocratic stage heroines—its elaborate artistic finish, and its exquisite feeling. She was particularly tactful and natural in the delineation of the complex emotions incidental to her encounter with her old lover, and her later scenes with her daughter were full of genuine maternal and womanly pathos. Her acting was not supremely eloquent, but it was very human, touching, and skilful. A less accomplished actor than Mr. Kendal would have made the lover either mawkish or

priggish, but he avoided both dangers, and won respect and sympathy for an ungrateful part.

In Godfrey's "The Queen's Shilling"—long familiar in this country, in slightly different form, as "The Lancers," Mrs. Kendal had a part which is a compound of Lady Gay Spanker and Miss Hardcastle. Neither phase of it presented any difficulty to her. Her breezy spirit, her coquetry, and her sincere womanliness were all delightful. But the chief acting honors must be awarded to Mr. Kendal. His character of the hero was not arduous, but I can think of no comedian—except possibly Charles Coghlan—who could have played it with a manliness so unaffected, a manner so refined and easy, or a fervor so spontaneous. Neither Lester Wallack nor E. A. Sothern, in their best estate, could have conducted the flirtation scene at the piano with so graceful an audacity as he, or have imparted such reality as he did to the episode in which he and the heroine mutually sought to entrap each other into a confession.

In the drunken scene, again, where the Colonel strives to convict him by grasping his wounded arm, he played with startlingly effective realism. In "Impulse," a play of little consequence, Mr. and Mrs. Kendal once more challenged comparison with Lester Wallack and Rose Coghlan,

this time certainly not to their own disadvantage, but in "All for Her," Kendal's Hugh Trevor, good as it was as a consistent and artistic study, had not the romantic glamor with which Wallack invested that copy of poor Sydney Carton.

Of the "Elder Miss Blossom" it need only be said that it was a very foolish play, written with the sole purpose of displaying Mrs. Kendal's executive abilities. This, in a way, it did, and she availed herself of the opportunities afforded with her accustomed cleverness, but was seen in no new light. One of their interesting experiments was a revival of Tom Taylor's old comedy, "Still Water Runs Deep," which, conventionally theatrical as it is, is nevertheless an effective acting play. Kendal, of course, made of Mildmay a fine example of the *suaviter in modo et fortiter in re,* and Mrs. Kendal was an excellent Mrs. Sternhold, but the representation is chiefly worthy of remembrance on account of the Potter of J. M. Dodson, a master study of a garrulous, selfish, cunning, shrew-ridden old man. Taken all in all, the performances of the Kendals must be ranked among the best representations of their kind seen in this country during the last fifty years.

XXVIII

HERBERT BEERBOHM TREE

Herbert Beerbohm Tree—Sir Herbert Tree as he is now—has played a very prominent part in the history of the English-speaking stage during the last thirty years, and has achieved a wide popularity, but has never done anything of serious dramatic importance. A very clever man, an ambitious, artistic, and extraordinarily adroit manager, and an accomplished performer, thoroughly expert in all the tricks of his trade, he has never established his right to a place in the ranks of great actors. He has come to the front in an era of the second rate. Although by the force of circumstances, and of his own tact and energy, he has, as the leading actor-manager in Great Britain, succeeded temporarily to the position occupied by Henry Irving, he can not for an instant be classed in the same category with that remarkable actor and man. In some respects he might be compared with Charles Kean.

To players of such caliber as Samuel Phelps, Edwin Booth, E. L. Davenport, or Lawrence Bar-

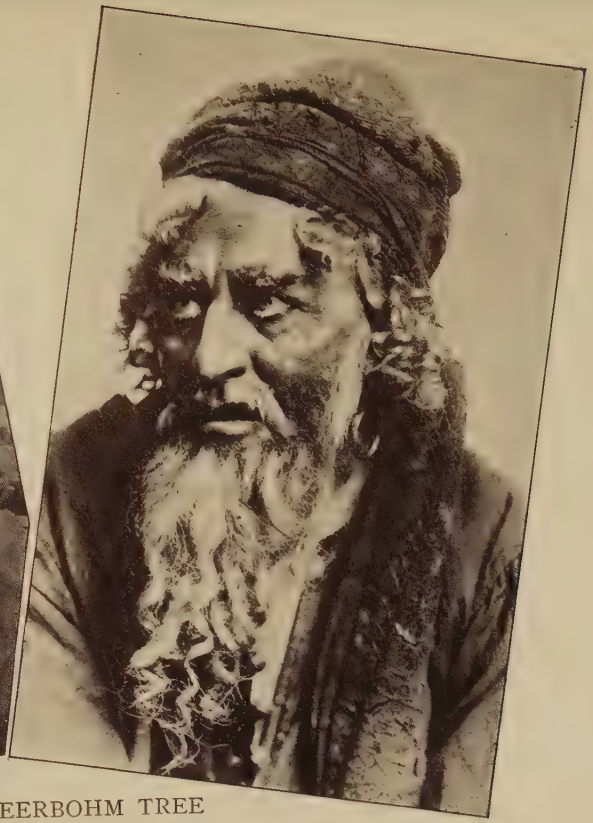
rett, he is immeasurably inferior. A good actor —within certain well-defined lines—he undoubtedly is, but beyond them he has never displayed more than ordinary ability. In the great classic characters, in many of which he has appeared by virtue of his prerogative, he has proved deficient in eloquence, power, and imagination. But in the splendor of his professional accoutrements, beauty of scenery, richness of costume, and spectacular groupings, he has excelled all his contemporaries. That he is versatile is true. His talents are of the inconspicuous kind that may be adapted readily to meet a great variety of conditions, but not conditions of the most exacting kind. They are impotent to aid him in characters whose attributes—humorous, imaginative, or emotional—transcend the ordinary. The mimetic faculty in him is strongly developed, but between mimicry and dramatic expression there is very little in common.

It was in January, 1895, that he made his first appearance in this city, playing two characters, Gringoire, the half-starved poet in Théodore de Banville's little drama, and Demetrius, the police spy, in Outram Tristram's Russian melodrama, "The Red Lamp." In the one case he was called upon to depict haggard, ragged youth, in the other bloated age, and in both, so far as the

physical representation was concerned, he succeeded perfectly. Gringoire had already been played here by Coquelin and Lawrence Barrett. The great French comedian portrayed it with minute and realistic finish, and with infinite humor and tenderness, if very little pathos. Lawrence Barrett imparted to it the earnestness and some of the glow of a romantic passion.

Tree's impersonation lacked the humor and naturalness of the one and the fire of the other. It appealed to the eye constantly, to the understanding occasionally, to the heart but rarely. The long, lean figure of the actor was well suited to the part of the famished hedge poet, and he made its outlines almost spectral by the elaboration of his rags and tatters. He somehow suggested the memory of Barnaby Rudge. The whole effect was theatrical, an impression heightened by the studied extravagance of almost every gesture and motion. The mechanical execution was deft and sure, but in this scarecrow there was neither heart nor poetry.

As the elderly Demetrius, he presented an amazing metamorphosis. With his false head, padded body, and red face, covered with liquorish blotches, he was totally unrecognizable, and he deepened the contrast by discarding all the unnatural exuberance of Gringoire's gesture and



HERBERT BEERBOHM TREE

as "Hamlet," and as "Shylock," in "The Merchant of Venice"

counterfeiting the sluggishness of age. This was sufficiently easy. The actual personality of Demetrius, as presented, was an obvious absurdity. A spy, who should aggressively and rudely thrust his nose, his eyes, and ears into everybody else's business, advertising his trade, as it were, in the biggest sort of display type, would not be worth his salt to the Russian or any other Government. A more serious objection is that the figure, supposed to be fraught with such evil potentiality, conveyed no sense of formidableness or menace. It was comic and insignificant. As in the case of Gringoire, the true dramatic impulse was lacking.

In Sidney Grundy's "A Bunch of Violets," a free adaptation from the "Montjoye" of Octave Feuillet, Mr. Tree played virtually the part made memorable by Charles Coghlan at the Union Square Theater. The latter gave an almost ideal interpretation of a character—unnatural in itself—in which power of will and intellect is devoted unscrupulously to the attainment of base ends, in defiance of the humaner emotions. In this embodiment, deprived of the aids of disguise and mimicry, Mr. Tree did good, but not extraordinary, work. He was more demonstrative, more showily theatrical, than Coghlan, but he had not his superfine polish, his skill in the subtle denote-

ment of internal conflict raging beneath resolutely maintained impassivity, or his air of dominant authority. He showed great skill, however, in showing the workings of a crafty mind of a distinctly inferior order, and he was impressive, though not thrilling, in the passions of defeat. In the scene where he was unexpectedly confronted in his own drawing-room by the woman whom he had discarded long years before, his acting was exceedingly clever, good in byplay and expression, and free from exaggeration. And his emotion, on the subsequent collapse of his intrigues, had some genuine ring in it, but it was not suggestive of the convulsion that should accompany the defeat of so resolute and imperious a spirit. Mrs. Tree played the malicious adventuress with much vivacity, humor, and incisiveness. As the hero of "Captain Swift," Mr. Tree indicated very adroitly the anxieties of conscious guilt and the impulses of a lawless nature disguised by a veneer of civilization, but the romantic side of the character, with its essential virility, its picturesque audacity, promptitude, and vigor, was more vividly illustrated by Maurice Barrymore, who had not a tithe of his stage cunning.

The limitations of his histrionic capacity were sharply emphasized when he tried to play Falstaff in "The Merry Wives of Windsor." The

impersonation has often been cited in evidence of his versatility, but actually it proved nothing but his resourcefulness in the art of "make-up." Even his face, with its high coloring, false nose, false cheeks, false chin, and false brow, was transformed beyond all possibility of recognition.* But it is one thing to construct a model and another to endow it with life. It is in the second process that the true versatility lies. He subjected himself, of course, to a tremendous handicap in virtually denying himself all possibility of facial play. This was especially serious in the case of an actor whose voice was thin and inflexible. He made heroic efforts to produce the mellow and sonorous bass which naturally would be expected to issue from a bulk so portentous, but these were not very successful. Had he used his voice naturally, and trusted to expression rather than sound, it is probable that he could have come much nearer to illusion. The obvious and fatal fault of the impersonation was its pervading artificiality. It was wholly devoid of spontaneous humor, although it evinced ample sense of comic situation. Even the fatness of it was unconvincing, except when in repose. It was constantly too nimble in movement and too prodigal of gesture, exhibiting an activity altogether incon-

* This make-up was wisely modified in later years.

sistent with its apparent unwieldiness. All the humor of it resided in extravagant pantomime.

Of course, the Falstaff of "The Merry Wives" is not the rich mine afforded by the inimitable Fat Jack of "Henry IV," but there is a vast abundance of comic stuff in him for the actor who can enter into his spirit. Mr. Tree's Falstaff was bulk without substance. But if his Falstaff was dull and amateurish, what must be said of his Hamlet? I do not remember seeing any serious representation of this character—with the possible exception of Wilson Barrett's—in which the inner beauties and significance of this marvelous creation, the qualities that appeal to heart and brain, were so utterly disregarded for the sake of superficial, conventional, and melodramatic expedients. From beginning to end, from "a little more than kin" to "the rest is silence," the one prominent characteristic was the relentless pursuit and capture of every traditional theatrical "point" and the execution of it in the most public manner possible. A score of illustrations might be given. Among them were his restless and perpetual use of the portrait about his neck, his frantic scribbling in his tablets, his constant flourishing of his sword, the rapid alternations of fortissimo and pianissimo in his speech, his employment of musical chords at the

supreme moment of the Ghost's declaration of the murder, his violence to Ophelia, his most unprincely rudeness to Polonius and others, and his antics during the play scene. The whole performance was shallow, imperceptive, fussy, unpoetic, and melodramatic. Rarely has the sweet and melancholy Prince been so unfeelingly manhandled.

Beerbohm Tree gave one of his most satisfactory performances in "An Enemy of the People." The fact is somewhat significant. No first-class actor has ever been permanently attracted by Ibsen, no experienced and fairly competent player of the second class has ever completely failed in him. This is because—in his social drama at all events—he deals essentially with the commonplace, even when, as in "Hedda Gabler," for instance, he is freakish. He does not deal with the nobler emotions or give any scope for the exercise of soaring imagination. In other words, he is comparatively easy to act, and that is one reason why he has found favor in the eyes of many players of moderate ability. "An Enemy of the People," although the philosophy of it is too old and trite to be particularly precious, is a good, wholesome play, containing faithful copies of familiar types, and illustrating a melancholy truth with forcible satire. For the most part, Mr.

Tree played the philanthropic, enthusiastic, honest, and disillusioned Stockman exceedingly well. In all externals, in make-up, dress, and carefully considered details of action and gesture, he was admirable. The zeal, the impetuosity, the innocence, and the unconscious vanity of the man were indicated with keen intelligence and artistic nicety, but at the crucial moments, when indignation and scorn ought to blaze out of him, there was no heat in the noisy passion. With all the agitation on the surface there was no suggestion of upheaval from the depths.

In "Trilby" he found in Svengali a character after his own heart, eccentric, colorful, extravagant, melodramatic. Wilton Lackaye's study of the hypnotist, theatrically effective as it undoubtedly was, and is, in its bold outlines and lurid coloring, seemed but a clumsy bit of work in comparison with this subtler, truer, more finely finished and thoroughly consistent impersonation, which from first to last was strikingly suggestive of the "dirty spider" to which Trilby compared him. The effect of his "make-up" was intensified by the length of his lean figure. The swift, noiseless, catlike movements, watchful eyes, and ghastly face, incessant restlessness, and the curiously skilful blend of fawning and arrogance, contributed to an abnormal, but not wholly in-

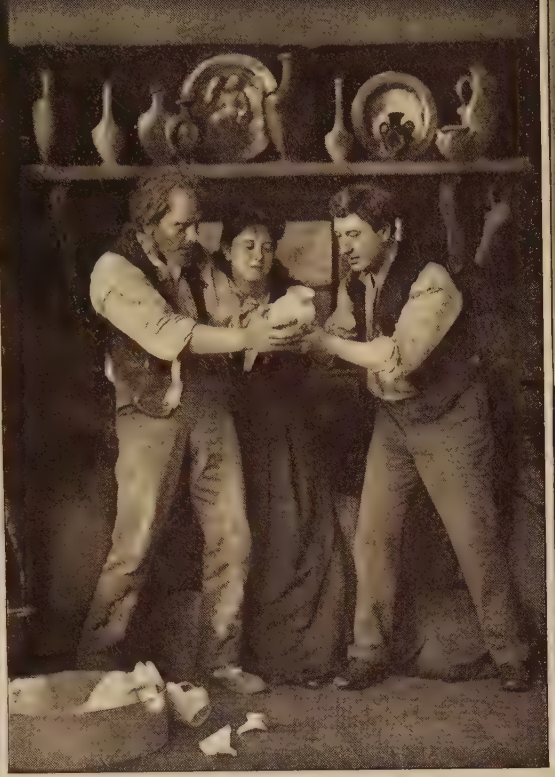
credible, individuality which will long live in the memory. The egotism, meanness, cynical selfishness, and innate ferocity of the creature were vividly exposed; but in all its viciousness and degradation—and herein lay the special excellence of the portrayal—there was the constant intimation of the artistic sense, the love of music for its own sake as well as its rewards, which was the villain's one redeeming grace. In this fantastic creation Mr. Tree came nearer to the establishment of perfect illusion than ever before. It was a wonderful performance of its kind, but it should be noted that it involved no manifestation of the higher kind of emotional eloquence, nor the embodiment of any great ideal. As an eccentric comedian, Mr. Tree has few if any rivals, but the great masterpieces of tragedy and comedy—Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, Lear, and Sir Peter Teazle—lie far beyond his artistic reach.

XXIX

JOHNSTON FORBES-ROBERTSON, E. S. WILLARD, JOHN HARE, AND OTHERS

Johnston Forbes-Robertson belongs to the twentieth rather than the nineteenth century, but may not be passed over in silence. He is an accomplished artist rather than a great actor. Intellectuality, refinement, a winning presence, and a beautiful delivery are his great assets. Pathos, not very deep, but true, he has, and humor, and much technical skill and imagination, but not tragic power in any considerable degree. Nature endowed him with a fine, expressive face and a rare voice—rich, vibrant, mellow, flexible—and in the use of it he took Phelps as his model. He could have found no better. To-day his utterance is the clearest, the most pregnant, the most varied, and the most mellifluous upon the stage. He has the scholarship and taste that impart clarity, crispness, point, and tone to diction. Herein lies his supreme excellence as an artist. In his youth he was in much request to play the heroes of juvenile romance and acquired much valuable experience. In them he was ele-

JOHN HARE



E. S. WILLARD
in "The Middleman"

© W. & D. Downey, London.

JOHNSTON FORBES-ROBERTSON
as "Hamlet"

gant, eloquent, correct, and sympathetic; but revealed no great dramatic power. Nor has he since. He can be dignified, impressive, or intense, but not volcanic or thrilling. Orlando he played excellently, and Romeo also, in the earlier scenes, with ardor, grace, and virility, but in the tragic parts he was labored and ineffectual.

His one great achievement in Shakespearean tragedy—the only great character, indeed, upon which he set his seal—was his Hamlet. That was an exquisite, profoundly interesting, intellectual, and distinctive bit of work, in many ways incomparably the best of recent years. Upon it his fame as an actor will mainly depend. Personally, greatly as I enjoyed and admired it, and grateful as I was for it, I have always thought that it held more of Forbes-Robertson than of the true Hamlet. Charles Fechter, in his prime, got nearer to my ideal of the Prince than any other actor I have ever seen in the part. His was an emotional rather than a mental study and made the Dane more human and actual, a lover as well as courtier, soldier, and philosopher. But, of course, he could not speak the lines with the consummate linguistic art of Robertson, perfectly as he comprehended them. Next to Fechter's Hamlet I place Booth's, which had emotion as well as intellect, and third Robertson's, in

which the heart was always much less active than the brains.

E. S. Willard, a fine actor, of far wider emotional range than Forbes-Robertson, though of less pronounced intellectuality, failed badly in Hamlet. His aim apparently was to present him in the naturalistic terms which he had employed with such triumphant results in the modern prose drama. His Prince, as might have been expected, was without glamor, romance, melancholy, philosophy, or dignity, neither prince nor soldier, scholar nor lover but a youth of common melodramatic mold despondent or robustious by turns, but never impressive. It was a great disappointment, for Mr. Willard—all too soon retired—was a versatile player of rare ability and power. His portrayal of the old potter, Cyrus Blenkarn, in "The Middleman" of Henry Arthur Jones, at once put him in the front rank of emotional actors. His exhibition of delirious exultation over the discovery that insured him wealth and the means to gratify his revenge upon the wrecker of his happiness and betrayer of his daughter was realistic in the highest degree.

The Judah of the same author demonstrated his great versatility. A wider contrast could scarcely be presented than that between old Blenkarn and the fanatical young clergyman led by

love into a betrayal of his conscience. This latter embodiment, if less theatrically effective than the other, was infinitely more subtle and on a higher plane of art. The actor, with great cleverness, succeeded in reflecting the inner nature of the entranced lover, the simple fervor of his faith, his inclination toward the supernatural, and his indulgence in ecstatic dreams, half poetic, half devout. When he ascribed the power of his oratory to the stedfastness of his faith he spoke with an illumination that carried the conviction of absolute sincerity. In the later scenes of anxiety, remorse, and confession, he acted with that simple realism which can be produced only by the most artful means. In "John Needham's Double," a bit of sheer melodrama, he gave further proof of his versatility by the consistency and ease with which he maintained a double personality, one open-hearted, frank, and generous, the other crafty, cruel and, in the end, bloody and desperate. It was in marking the gradual progress from bad to worse of the criminal that he showed the discrimination of the artist. His performance was many times better than the play.

But it was in "The Professor's Love Story," perhaps, that he made the most popular hit of his American career. This was one of the many

notable cases in which public taste was abundantly vindicated. The play itself, dramatically considered, was of small account, with a loose, fragile, and often extravagant story. Many of the characters, to be frank, were dull and unnatural, but others, including that of the central figure, were invested with all that tender, dainty, whimsical imagination and sympathetic charm characteristic of the genius of Barrie at his best. But the success won was due, primarily and emphatically, to the acting of Mr. Willard as Prof. Goodwillie. The impersonation, like all the others presented here by this fine player, was a consistent study of character from beginning to end, with a strongly marked individuality, signified by a pure histrionism almost completely independent of the tricks of the theatrical dresser. The face was not disguised at all, and there was no eccentric peculiarity of costume to conceal poverty of artistic resource. The quick and eloquent play of feature, always a special feature of this actor's work, proved of inestimable value in the interpretation of a character so largely intellectual. Much of the play is farcical, some of it somewhat clumsily farcical, but Mr. Willard, while he was on the stage, kept it in the higher regions of comedy.

Even when he had to dip his pen into water

and drink the ink—a very stale and clownish device—he did it so simply and naturally that common sense escaped with a moderate shock. His worn and anxious face, his restless and impulsive gesture, his troubled eye and dreamy manner, the impatient sighs with which he realized that his power of concentration in his work was deserting him, his vague uneasiness when his fair young secretary was absent, and his perfectly unconscious devotion to her when present, combined to make a picture of extraordinary fidelity to nature, of the choicest humor, and of no little pathos. The gradual awakening of the love-sick student to the true state of his case was accomplished in gradations of admirable subtlety, through the most delicate modifications of speech and manner, and in the masterly scene —the best in the play—where the professor, after a brief hour of supreme happiness, being led to believe that the girl does not really love him, bravely offers her freedom, covering his own breaking heart with a smile, Mr. Willard rose to the situation with really beautiful simplicity and power. One such episode as this atones, by the generous emotions which it excites, for a great many stage offenses.

In "A Rogue's Comedy" and "The Physician," two ingenious but not valuable plays by

Henry Arthur Jones, well provided with effective theatrical situations, Mr. Willard again demonstrated his faculty of impersonation and his complete efficiency in every department of social melodrama, but did nothing that impressed itself very vividly on the memory; but some time afterward, in a sketch founded on "Martin Chuzzlewit," he presented an embodiment of Tom Pinch which may, without exaggeration, be called a masterpiece. He really made the conception of Dickens live in action, and, indeed, may be said to have improved upon it, for he not only invested it with all the attributes of tender, simple, brave, and loyal humanity, that have given it a place of such high distinction in the immortal Dickens portrait gallery, but with the most discerning artistry avoided some of those occasional touches of comic or sentimental exaggeration which marred not a few of the great humorist's most vital creations. As an example of pure, realistic, interpretative comedy, I should rank it among the highest achievements of the modern stage. It was not only in its physical presentment—in the perfection of disguise and carriage—but in soul and spirit, that the fictitious creature lived. And when it is remembered that the impersonator of Prof. Goodwillie and Tom Pinch first won fame as the ideal villain of British melodrama,

the wonderful development of the actor in skill and range will be realized, and his premature retirement more deeply regretted. But he worked, as I believe, long enough to reveal the best that was in him. A genuine actor, from top to toe, potent in passion and pathos, with a keen sense of character and ample executive resources for its portrayal, his emotional and imaginative grasp had its limitations. These were defined sharply in his Hamlet, and there is no good reason for supposing that he could have triumphed in poetic tragedy. But in his own wide field he was one of the most accomplished and versatile players in his generation.

John Hare has long enjoyed the reputation of being the neatest executant among the light and eccentric comedians of the English stage. He is a master of minute and suggestive, not fidgety, detail. And he is a first-rate comedian of the dry, cynical, polished type. With the elemental and robuster emotions he does not deal, although he can exhibit vigor or anger. He can be testy or urbane and gently sympathetic, but his pathos is somewhat thin. As a sharp-witted, well-bred, experienced, and tolerant man of the world he has had few equals and fewer superiors. A great actor he has not been, for he has rarely, if ever, played a part making any serious demand

upon the emotional or imaginative faculties. His acting resembles a jewel valued more for the workmanship than the substance. His first appearance in this country was made as that elderly debauchée, the Duke of St. Olpherts, in "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith." His manner was perfect. His ease, his deliberation, his superiority to all emotion, his epicurean enjoyment of a new sensation even at his own expense, his equanimity under provocation, and the deadly nature of his smiling retorts were all brilliant features of an exquisitely artistic and finished embodiment. It was a superb bit of artistry in which there was nothing to admire but the execution.

In "A Pair of Spectacles" his skill was devoted to a better purpose, and exhibited fine qualities. Beyond question, his Benjamin Goldfinch, as a piece of acting, was much finer than that of Mr. Stoddart. At the family breakfast table the little, old-fashioned, white-headed figure seemed to radiate benevolence. It would be difficult to conjure up a vision more suggestive of beaming good will. The simplicity and spontaneity of it were delightful. Afterward he denoted the slow growth of suspicion in a hitherto trustful heart with a multitude of felicitous strokes betokening the keenest observation and delicate humor. At the crisis of his transforma-

tion he exhibited a degree of heat and passion of which he might scarcely have been thought capable. It was very clever acting, but in these places the outbursts of Stoddart had the more genuine ring. In "A Quiet Rubber" his study of the testy old Irishman, Lord Kildare, had all the delicate finish of an etching, but in this case again the mechanism was clearly superior to the material.

A similar remark would apply, with equal appositeness, to his Spencer Jermyn in "The Hobby Horse" of Pinero, a piece in which smartness of dialogue and two or three ingenious situations made some amends for an improbable story and lack of real dramatic interest. As the sporting squire, who regarded the turf as the noblest and most beneficent of social institutions, he presented a most life-like picture of a dapper little country gentleman, not too wise, generous, hot-tempered, opinionated, whimsical, and affectionate, with a ready tongue and a charming address. The part required no special dramatic ability except in the one scene when Jermyn learns the truth about his wife's foolish but innocent escapade and its serious consequences, and apologises to the unlucky curate who has been the chief sufferer. In this Mr. Hare, assuming a complex mood in which anger, irony, and a sense of

humiliation were skilfully blended, acted with great naturalness and the nicest discernment.

Mr. Hare laid the foundations of his great reputation in England by the pre-Raphaelite finish of his impersonations in Tom Robertson's comedies. One of the most admired of these was his Sam Gerridge in "Caste." Here he preferred to play the part of Eccles, closely associated in the minds of local playgoers with the racy and liquorish humor of William Davidge and George Honey. It was hinted, not without plausibility, that Mr. Hare would act it along new lines, giving it an air of faded respectability. But he made no such mistake as that. His Eccles, if less boldly and broadly comic than those of some of his predecessors, was to the full as truthful, humorous, and disreputable. The faint suggestion of bygone better days, the occasional vestiges of such gentility as might become a decayed waiter, with which he endowed him, only served to emphasize the sodden wretchedness, meanness, and degradation of the man. His make-up, with the pallid, bloated, jellied features, thin and straggling hair, limp whiskers, shaking lips and hands, and lean and palsied figure clad in a filthy shirt and threadbare suit, was perfect, and his acting, with its alternations of cringing and bullying, of pitiful whining and contemptible

self-assertion, its maudlin pathos, its moments of hiccoughing declamation, and outbreaks of impotent and hysterical anger, was wonderfully realistic. The whole impersonation might have been a copy from life, finished with a minuteness that might almost have challenged examination by a microscope. And this flawless finish was characteristic of all the work that Mr. Hare did at the time of which I am writing and later. It was fascinating to watch the deftness, inerrancy, and ease of his execution. And expertness of this kind, of course, is proof of the high intelligence that lies behind it. The fact remains that Mr. Hare, or Sir John Hare, as he is now, has confined himself hitherto to characters destitute of those elements which provide the most severe tests for histrionic genius, and he has, therefore, no legitimate claim for admission to the ranks of great actors. But in his own line he is a consummate artist.

Among our many visitors from the English stage there are several who must be mentioned if only to prove that they have not been overlooked. Geneviève Ward (the Madame Guerabella of long-ago opera days) is one of them. She achieved distinction, but not greatness. She approached it most nearly, perhaps, in her Lady Macbeth, a most impressive and capable perform-

ance, forceful, intelligent, and majestic, but lacking, in the crises, the essential fire. She had dignity, refinement, strength, artistry, a fine voice and elocutionary skill, with a special faculty for the incisive delivery of lines barbed with scorn or wit. It is by her performance of the adventuress in "Forget-Me-Not" that she will be chiefly remembered. It had the grace, the suppleness, the glitter, and the deadly venom of the serpent. But impersonations of this order have no real bigness. The artistic merits of Mrs. Langtry were infinitesimal, but she acquired, at the last, a certain measure of technical efficiency. Olga Nethersole, in her earlier days, manifested a natural impulsive power, which encouraged bright hopes for her future, which have not been fulfilled. In hypersentimental and morbid emotionalism there is neither charm nor utility.

Charles Wyndham for years conferred the boon of innocent merriment upon multitudes by his vivacity, activity, and dexterity in a series of farcical comedies. He was a comedian of the Charles Mathews order. He had the volatility of the latter, but not his finesse or versatility. He had neither passion nor pathos. His performance of David Garrick, in which he was extremely popular, was inferior to that of E. A. Sothern. His Charles Surface had dash and

gayety, but was not comparable with that of Charles Coghlan. A good, serviceable comedian, he owed much of his prominence to the fact that he was his own manager, and his discernment in the selection of his plays and his supporting casts. Miss Mary Moore (Mrs. James Albery), a capital actress in light eccentric comedy, has contributed largely to the success of some of his most profitable productions, and for a long time George Giddens was a tower of strength in his company. Mr. Giddens is probably the best low comedian upon the English-speaking stage to-day. He is versatile, has the true *vis comica,* and is expert in all the mechanics of acting.

In this casual review of the New York theater during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, some performers of capacity or note may have escaped mention, but, I think, not many. Of the illustrious foreigners who have played here in their own language—Duse, Bernhardt, Coquelin, Jane Hading, Mounet-Sully, Réjane, and others—I have not spoken because they have no direct relation to the American stage. An exception was made in the case of Salvini, first, on account of the superlative value of the example that he set, and, secondly, because he used an English-speaking support. The record, as it

stands, is not inspiriting, so far as the art of acting is concerned. It indicates a condition of progressive decadence. The high imaginative drama, tragic or romantic, has virtually disappeared, not because the public will have none of it—for occasional revivals of it are eagerly attended—but for the lack of competent interpreters.

To-day there are not on the American stage half a dozen players, male or female, who could bear the test of comparison with any one of fifty who were flourishing thirty or forty years ago. Of great actors there is not one. The best we have, in almost every department of drama—musical comedy and wild farce, of course, are not included in that category—are survivors of a past generation. Stars there are in plenty, but only two or three of them could by any stretch of courtesy be called first-rate actors. Most of them are specialists in the art of self-reproduction, and, therefore, utterly unprogressive. The name of the new performers is legion, but the number of them who exhibit signs of brilliant promise is woefully small. In all the arts of production—in painting, lighting, machinery, and spectacle, even in playwriting—the stage is making progress, but the races of competent actors is threatened with extinction.

Why this is so is no mystery. It is the inevitable result, long ago foreseen and foretold, of the prevailing system of purely commercial management that has obliterated the old stock companies (not the modern affairs of two performances daily and a fresh play every week, which are a great deal worse than useless), which were the only practical schools of acting, abolished competition, provided endless circuits for worthless plays, and manufactured "stars" at will by the process of advertisement. The only chance for a real and permanent theatrical revival, the reestablishment of the theater, that is, upon a dramatic, literary, and artistic foundation—with actors capable of interpreting either masterpieces or pot-boilers—lies in the restoration of the stock system and of honest, wholesome competition. That is my unshakeable conviction after half a century of observation and experience. Sooner or later, I believe, this will come about. Signs of impending change in theatrical conditions—the disruption of syndicates, significant bankruptcies, etc.—are not wanting. From all sides come reports of the organization of new stock companies with definite programmes and good financial backing.

If these experiments succeed there will be no lack of imitators. Then we may be upon the

brink of a new era. In the host of little theaters —artistic, realistic, futuristic, independent, experimental, or what not—I do not, I must confess, put much faith. Some of them are excellent things in their way, and deserve every encouragement, but of all the many scores of such experiments with which I have been acquainted not one, so far, as I can remember, has lived for long, or left appreciable results behind. It is in a system of competitive stock companies, run on business principles, striving to win public patronage by deserving it, that I see the promise of a theater that will command the favor and support of all the intelligent classes.

But I do not hold the syndicate system alone responsible for the low estate into which the theater and theatrical art have fallen in these latter days. A considerable share of the blame must rest upon a public press which, in the interests of commercialism, has not hesitated to accept false standards and help the managerial game by lavishing unmerited and deceptive praise upon poor plays and indifferent performers. If the theater is ever to regain respect, it must be discussed truthfully, capably, and fearlessly.

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Towse, John Ranken

Sixty years of the theater